Art of Tantra, Tantricism & Tantric Tradition

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DR. Kamal Shankar Srivastava

Tantra is a special manifestation of Indian feeling art and religion. It may really be understood, in the last resort by people, who are prepared to undertake inner meditative action. Indeed, tantra is one thread, which can guide us through the labyrinth, all the different manifestations of tantra can be strung on it. This thread in the idea that tantra is a cult of ecstasy, focused on a vision of cosmic sexuality, life-styles, ritual magic, myth, philosophy and a complex of signs and emotive symbols converge upon the vision. The basic texts in which these are conveyed are also called tantras. Tantra does also include images and ideas from the oldest strata of Indian religion, many from the Veda and Upaniṣad, often reinterpreting them in visual terms by diagrams and personification. Thus the tantra is the only divine revelation, which throws open the gates of arcane nature of these, who have the coverage to pear into it, self-culture, according to the tantric method develops the will and endows the Sādhaka (worshiper) with some love powers (siddhis), within a comparatively short time. Indeed, there is no śāstra superior to tantra, no guru superior to tantras, no path superior to tantra, no method superior to tantra.

The present work entitled; Tantra, Tantricism and Tantric Tradition, an attempt has been made by Dr. Srivastava to define, to explain the traditions, modern concept of tantra and to focus and enlighten the tantracism, evolution, development and to describe tantric tradition in simple explanation and lucid manner.

This monograph consists of eight chapters, i.e., (i) Introduction (ii) Tantra, Tradition and Modern concept (iii) Mother goddess (śakti) in Hindu and Buddhist tantras (iv) Devī as the great goddess (v) Tantra in Mahāyāna Buddhism (vi) Tantricism, early medieval economic and social factors (vii) Tantricism - Early history and theoretical concept and (viii) Tantric tradition with special reference to Mahāvidyās, apart from a detailed bibliography and relevant illustrations.

The present book ensures the fascination to the art-lovers, especially tantric art and readers of tantric tradition.

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IAS

AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN
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वागर्थाविव संम्पृक्तौ वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये।
जगतपितरौ बन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौः।।
(Raghu Vaṃśa Mahākāvyam-I.1)

DEDICATED
TO
LORD ŚIVA AND ŚAKTI

– Kamal S Srivastava

PREFACE

Indeed, the Tantra prescribes very different method of self culture. The great God (Mahādeva) himself is the expounder of the law – i.e., the divine knowledge – which he revealed at the dawn of creation in his aspect as Brāhmin.

The hall of sorrow, the value of tears, the hall of torments and other such names by which schools of Transcendent as philosophy disparage the world, have no place in the Tantra. The Tantra is the breaths of divinity and the world is evolved from the breaths. The divine mother is in every molecule, in every atom is all things which constitute the world. In fact, she is the causeless cause of whatever is she is the manifested Brāhmin. The world is the playground (*Lilāśksetra*) of the all blissful Ānandamayī. The tantra is the only divine Revelation which throws open the gates of arcane nature to these, who have the courage to pear in to it. Self-culture, according to tantric method develops the will and endows the Sādhaka (worshiper) with some love powers (*Siddhis*) within a comparatively short time.

Indeed, Tantra is all comprehensive and non-sectarian. It enjoins his worship of Śakti that without which nothing can live and more and have its being. The worship of Viṣṇu is as much a part of it on it the worship of Kālī, although the worship of the latter in held to be comparatively easy and more suited to the present race of men. It is rightly stated, "There is no śāstra superior to Tantra, no guru superior to Tantras, no path superior to Tantra, no method superior to tantra.

Tantra is a special manifestation of Indian feeling, art and religion. It may really be understood, in the last resort, by people who are prepared to undertake inner meditative action. There can be no quick and easy definitions. They have been tried; but they their turn out to be so brad and general if they are expressed in Indian words that they scarcely mean anything to the Westerner, or so narrow that they are only true for a par to the enormous and diffuse reality. There are many variations of practice and belief. Indeed, there is one thread which can guide us through the labyrinth; all the different manifestations of Tantra can be strung on it. This thread is the idea that Tantra is a cult of ecstasy, focused on a vision of cosmic sexuality. Life-styles, ritual, magic, myth, philosophy and a complex of signs and emotive symbols converge upon that vision. The basic texts in which these are conveyed are also called Tantras. Tantra does also include images and ideas from the oldest strata of

Indian religion, many from the Veda and Upaniṣada, often reinterpreting them in visual terms by diagrams and personification.

Tantra has a particular wisdom of its own. This sets it apart from all other religious and psychological systems, especially those traditional to the orthodox Brāhmans. The other systems agree in asserting that our real world is a meaningless illusion, that the mental play of forms which we call our experience of life and the world is utterly without value. They show that all those experiences which ordinarily we cherish most, such as love for our loves and children, food, the intense emotional joy nature, music and art can produce, even the adoration we may feel for a personal God are merely traps, whose grip on us has to be praised loose. We must learn to reject totally any fondness for worldly experience of any kind, so as to allow our whole attention to be flooded with a consuming abstract vision of the Brāhmin, i.e., 'The Truth', 'The undivided whole', which is the ultimate Ground of Being. According to the Brāhmin systems, when we manage to stay permanently in this state of attention, with our entire mind stilled and absorbed in the Ultimate, we may achieve Release. Our nature may cease to be human, so that we are converted into an all embracing Consciousness which is at once Being and Bliss. Obviously it needs a special kind of heroism to detach oneself utterly from experience in the world, and it takes a long, long time – many successive lives according to Indian thinking. But this has been the constant obsession of Indian orthodoxies.

Hindu Tantra proclaims everything, the crimes and miseries as well as the joys, to be the active play of a female creative principle, the Goddess of many forms, sexually penetrated by an invisible, indescribable, seminal male. In ultimate fact he has generated her for his own enjoyment. And the play, because it is analogous to the activity of sexual intercourse, is pleasurable to her. The Tantrika must learn to identify himself with that cosmic pleasure-in-play, and to recognize that what may seem to others to be misery is an inevitable and necessary part of its creative web, whereas the pleasure is a true reflection of the cosmic delight. This point is made even in the titles of Tantrik texts: Kāmakalāvilāsa (p. 206), for example, means 'erotic joy in the movements of love', Śaktisamāgama Tantra means the Tantra about Śakti intercourse'. By the exertions of their coupling the two divinities generate around themselves, in various kinds of patterned halo in stages less and less subtle, more particularized figures, called devatās, among whom their energy is shared. The patterns are described in the manḍala designs and yantras with which the texts and art are very much concerned. Buddhist Tantra in practice shares which Hindu the use and valuation of figurative symbols, even though it may seem to differ over their ultimate significance.

The Tantras are regarded traditionally as the revelation of the three supreme deities, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, but in form they are dependent upon Śiva alone and almost invariably consist of a dialogue in which Śiva in answer to the questions of his wife, upholds the mysteries of the sect. Avalon distinguishes between Āgama and Nigama forms of Tantras; in the former Śiva acts as guru, while in the latter the Devī instructs in reply to the questions of her lord. The range of subjects treated is encyclopedic. The Tantras are the storehouse of Indian occultism, they are the chief authorities on yoga practice, they deal with all branches of worship, there is in them a considerable amount of philosophical material. Avalon sums up their contents in the following catalogue: 'The Supreme Spirit, the creation and destruction of the universe, the origin and worship of the devas, classification of beings, the origin and worship of the devas, classification of beings, the heavenly bodies, descriptions of the worlds and hells, of man and woman, and of the centers (cakra) of the human body, the law and duty (dharma) of the different ages, and of the stages of life in the individual called asrama, the sacraments, the consecration of images of devatā, mantra, yatra, Mudrā all forms of spiritual training (sādhanā) and worship (pujā, upāsanā), whether external or mental, including worship with the panchatattva, consecration of houses, lands wells, trees, etc., descriptions of holy shrines (tīrtha), purascharana, japa, vṛata, *satkarmasādhanā* and all forms of ceremonial rites and "magic", meditation (dhyāna) and yoga, the duties of kings, law, custom, magic and science generally." This characteristically confused list shows how varied are the subjects treated in the Tantras. Whether there is in them anything of great scientific or historical value is a present not very certain. If there is, it seems likely to be in the realm of physiology. V.G. Rele has recently said: 'The anatomy of nerves in the Tantric manuals compares favorably with our present knowledge of them.

The word Tantra has various meanings; starting from that of web or warp, it came gradually to stand for an uninterrupted series, orderly ritual, the doctrinal theory or system itself, and finally its literary exposition. It need not necessarily refer to a religious Śāstra, One of the most famous Indian collections of fables, which was certainly known in the fifth century, is called the Panchatantra, since it is divided into five books. Amongst the most influential of the later Sanskrit grammar was the Kālatantra of Sarvavarman, whose date is uncertain. When the word is applied to a religious work it is not limited to those of the Śāktas. One of the most important methods of Vedic exegesis was the Karma Miṃānsā, and in the early eighth century the scholar Kumārila produced a work belonged to this school known as the *Tantravartikā*, a prose commentary on a work some centuries older by Śabara. To the same literature belongs the Tantra-ratna, a commentary produced about 1300. About the same time the sect known as the Madhavas sprang up in opposition to the Vedantism of Śaṇkara; among the works of the founder, Madhava (1199-1278 A.D.), is the Tantrasāra, a treatise on ritual. Further,, in 1000A.D., a general work on Śaivism by Abhinava Gupta, who in some of his writings quotes from certain of the Śākta Tantras. These examples are sufficient to show that the word was widely use n literary circles.

It is now commonly understood to denote that body of religious scripture which is stated to have been revealed by Śiva as the specific scripture for the fourth Kālī age, in which the world now is. According to Hindu chronology, we are living in the last stage of a Kalpa, hastening downwards to utter destruction. Each age has its specially revealed scripture. The distinction between Tantras and Purāṇas is not always well marked. Both are didactic and sectarian. As a rule Tantras contain less historical and legendary matter, and more directions as to ritual, but a more important difference lies in this, that while the Purāṇas approve of Vedic rites as well as of others, for which they give directions, the Tantras insist that ceremonies other than those they prescribe are now useless. In the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra (II,15) Śiva declares: 'The fool, who would follow other doctrines heedless of mine is as great a sinner as a parricide or the murderer of a Brāhmin or of a woman. The Vedic rites and mantras which were efficacious in the first age have ceased to have power in this. They are now as powerless as snakes whose fangs have been drawn and are like dead things. Certainly in practice the Tantras have superseded the Vedas in authority over a large part of India.

There are Buddhist Tantra as well as Hindu Tantras, Vaiṣṇava Tantras as well as Śākta ones. The common element seems to be that they are all the expression of a system of magical and sacramental ritual which professes to attain the highest aims of religion by means of spells, diagrams, gestures and other physical methods. Tantrism represents, in the words of Eliot, 'a simplification of religion, but on mechanical rather than emotional lines.' Gilmore expresses somewhat the same idea when he refers to it as a revolt which has as its avowed object 'the reduction of the effort required to reach what in the Hindu system is equivalent to our 'salvation' by suiting that effort to present human ability.

Eliot, in his work Hinduism and Buddhism, makes a distinction between Tantrism and Śāktism which is in some respects a useful one, but it should be noted that the continued influence of the Tantric system depends almost entirely on its association with the worship of a goddess or goddesses, and that historically it is not easy to separate the two movements. Even Tantric Buddhism is permeated with Śākta ideas, and in Hinduism it is only the ŚāktaTantras that have proved of great influence.

As Farquhar has said, "awaits the toil of scholarly investigators. There are, in addition to the Tantras, other closely allied Śākta treatises and compendia.

In spite of this confusion, however, certain Tantras are well attested and have obviously had great influence. The general characteristics of the literature can e determined. The word Tantra is not used in its specialized sense of a religious treatise in the Amarakosā, the great Sanskrit dictionary, which was probably composed about AD 500. Avalon, in sympathy, apparently, with those Śāktas, who insist on the great antiquity of their texts, argues that the silence of the Amarakosā proves little, a there are other omissions from it. A more important piece of evidence in found, however, in the fact that the Chinese pilgrims, who visited India between AD 400 and 700 and have left revealing accounts of the political and religious conditions during those centuries, make no reference to Tantric literature. It seems safe to assume, therefore, that the Tantras did not take definite shape before the seventh century, through many of the mantras and hymsn which they include may be of very much earlier date. From the seventh until the eighteenth century there was a steady steam of these works, and of commentaries upon them.

Antiquity of Tantras

Notwithstanding the antiquity of the Śākta-Tantric cults and rituals and their theoretical aspects, there had been no consistent attempt in the past to give them a complete philosophical shape. This can be attributed to the fact that the Śākta-Tantric teachings were transmitted from teacher to pupil as a secret and mysterious knowledge to be understood and retained only by those considered competent. That is why in the philosophical compendiums – the *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, *Sarvasiddhāntasaṃgraha*, *Vivekavilāśa*, etc. – Śākta philosophy as a whole has no place, although some of its aspects have been referred to in connection with other philosophical systems.

The need for reconstructing the Śākta viewpoint on the basis of the available Tantric texts was felt in the last quarter of the 19th century by the advocates of the Neo-Tantric movement who wanted to identify Tantrism with the totality of Hinduism and regard it as the essence of the Vedas. The greatest exponents of this line were Sir John Woodroffe and his associates who composed numerous interpretative works on Tantrism during the first three decades of the 20th century. In 1937 PanchananTarkaratna published his Śākta commentaries on Brahmasūtra and Īśopanisad in which he made a laudable attempt to put forward what is known as the Śākta viewpoint in Indian philosophical tradition. This branch of study was further developed by M.M. GopinathKaviraj.

Infact, most of the Tantric works are medieval efficient and inefficient renderings or rewritings or the teachings of the earlier lost texts. It is said that the traditional sixty four Bhairavagamas were monistic, ten Śaivāgamas were dualistic and eighteen Raudrāgamas were of diverse views. Most of the original texts are lost. Generally, the Jnanapadasection of the Āgamas contain some philosophical speculations. Among the Tantric texts of philosophical significance mention may be made of *Svacchanda*, *Mālinīvijaya, Vijñānabhairava, Tṛisirobhairava, Kulāvyavahāra, Paramānand Tantra, Āgamarahasya,* etc., The Śrīvidya school has an extensive literature of its own. This school claims Agastya, Durvasa and Dattatreya as its earlier exponents. References to a lost Dattatreyasamhitā are found. Some of its contents are said to have formed part of the *Tripurārahasya,* the Jnāna section of which throws much light on Śākta philosophy. Gauḍapada's *Śrīvdiyāratnasūtra*, which is said to have been commented upon by Śaṇkarācārya himself, is a useful Śākta text. Philosophically important are *Prapancasāra,* attributed to Śaṇkara and commented upon by *Padmapāda,* Prayogakramadīpikā, Lakṣmaṇa Deśikā's *Śāradātilaka,* and the texts of the Kasmira Śaiva School. Abhinavagupta in his numerous works has successfully established the foundation of Śākta philosophy. Among his successors, Goraksa or Mahesvarnanda composed an original work called *Maharghāmanjarī* and commentaries like Parimala, Samvidullasa etc. Punyananda's Kāmakalāvilasa is an authoritative work on Śākta philosophy. Its commentary, known as Gidvalliws composed by Nathananda. Amṛtānanda, a disciple of Punyananda, wrote an important commentary known as *Yoginihṛdayadijikā* which was made on the Yoginthṛdaya section of the Nityasodasikarnava of the Vīmakesvara Tantra. He was also the writer of Saubhagyasubhagodaya and other texts of great philosophical significance. Svatantrananda's *Matṛkacakraviveka* is an exceptional work in five parts in which the aspects of Tantric secret knowledge have been explained. The best exponent of Śākta philosophy is Bhāskaracārya who flourished in the 18th century. His most celebrated work is Setubandha which is a commentary on Nityaṣodasīkarṇava. His other works include *Kaula-tripurā*, *Saubhāgyabhāskara* (commentary on the *Lalitasahasṛanāmā*), *guptavati* (commentary on the Devimahatmya), *Sambhavānanda-Kalpalatā*, *Vanvasya-rahasya,* etc.

In the Tantras the whole process is explained with reference to the human body. The space holding the thousand-petalled lotus in the cerebral region is called brahmarandhra or Śūnya. It is the breeding spot of *Icchā-Śakti* and *Parā-Nāda*. It is a part of the *visargamandala* which is great causal state of Brāhmin or Samvit symbolized by Sabdabrahma or Kulakuṇḍalini. The three subdivisions of Parā-Vindu, namely Vindu (Aparā), Vīja and Nāda (Aparā), constitute the kuṇḍalinītriangle. The subtle elements of matter differs from kuṇḍalinī and they reside in different centres of the forehead and nerves. The aforesaid triangle symbolized by Śiva (Aparā-Vindu), Śakti (Vīja) and their equilibrium (Aparā-Nāda), is called A-Ka-Tha triangle, each of its lines being consisted of sixteen letters. Apart from the Para and Aparā-Nādas, there is a third Nāda, known as Mahā-Nāda, caused by the unmanifested sound of the letters which is conveyed by the Kuṇḍalinī. It serves as a link between the Para and Aparā-Nādas, between conscious and non-conscious elements. The upward and downward motions of the Nādas are carried through the main nerves.

To put the whole thing in a more intelligible way, it may be said that Samvit or pure consciousness exists. In the Śākta Tantras it is conceived of as the non-dual existence of static Śiva and kinetic Śakti-two positions of the same thing. But, side by side, there is the existence of an unconsciousness, the material would. How can this be explained? According to the non-dualist Tantras it is said that the material world is caused by the self-expression or manifestation of pure consciousness. How can that be possible? The Tantras say that pure consciousness works through its 'Śakti' or inherent power. This Śakti is first appears an *Icchā-Śakti* or will-power, the desire to be manifested. Subsequently it works in its two aspects – *Vidyā-Śakti* and *Avidyā Śakti* or *Māyā-Śakti*. Both of these a conscious principles with the difference that while the former is illuminating consciousness, the latter is veiled consciousness, i.e., consciousness appearing as unconsciousness. This Māyā-Śakti is composed of these guṇas – Sattva, Rajas, Tamas – and known as Triguṇa-Śakti or Kāmakalā symbolized by the triangle. Hence this Māyā-Śakti is not unreal (this is a departure from the Vedāntic line), and it is the cause of the material world.

Creation is this the self-expression of the Supreme Being, the subject viewing itself as object, I (ahaṃ) as it (idam). In the dualistic Tantras, however, the whole process has been viewed from a different angle. Here both Śiva and Śakti, the static (prakāśa) and kinetic (vimarsā) aspect of the same reality, are treated as individual conscious principles. Śiva is unity behind all dirersity. Śakti is the same but, since it acts on different things, it is expressed as the inherent nature of the things themselves on and through which it works. Still Śakti is not different from Śiva. Vindu is an eternal material entity outside the realm of Śakti, but it is dependent on the functioning of Śakti. Thus, these three separate entities are the three permanent categories described as three ratnas. In the matter of creation Śiva is the efficient cause, Śakti is the instrumental cause, and Vindu is the material cause. Because Śakti is not material in nature; at the time of its activity it undergoes not change, but it may have transformation in Vindu.

The word Tantra has various meanings and amongst others śāstra generally and therefore does not necessarily denote a religious śāstra. In the sense, in which the term is most widely known and is used, it denotes that the body of religious scripture i.e., Śāstra which is stated is have been revealed by Śiva as specific scripture of the fourth or present Kali age (Kali yuga). This is the definition of Tantra according to Śāstra itself. The Hindu Śāstra is classified in Sṛuti, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra. The three last all assumes the first as their base and are infant, merely special presents of it for the respective ages. It has said that the Tantras are regarded by those who fellow them as a fifth Vedas as ancient as the others and of superior authority. According to Beveridge's History of India, no śāstra is superior to the Veda. That practical application of its teachiys however, which is prescribed in the Tantra is to be followed is preference to the vaidikacara in the kaliyuga. The relations of the Veda to the Tantra have been compared with that of the Jivātmā to the Paramātmā. The Tantra is said by its adheresnt to represent the inner core of the former. The present monographs entitled "Art of Tantra, Tantricism and Tantric Tradition", an attempt has been made to define and to explain the traditions and modern concept of Tantra and to focus and enlighten the Tantricism, evolution and development and to describe Tantric tradition in simple explanation and lucid manner.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Tantra has mapped the mechanism of currents of energy through which the creative impulse is distributed at once through man's body and the world's. The universe of phenomena which results has, therefore, for the Tantrika a kind of subtle four – dimensional skeleton of channels, the knots and crossing of which are occupied by devata figures. The Tantra texts and art contain maps of the system, together with detailed instructions for working the mechanism. The Tantrika does this by sādhanā, i.e., psychosomatic effort, assimilating his own body to higher and higher levels of cosmic body-pattern. In the end he may become identical with the original double sexed deity, which is involved, without beginning or end, in blissful intercourse with itself. The incentive to his continual effort is an occasional vision, as if one were to glimpse the fire of a raging furnace through a crack in its wall, of the cosmic bliss which is an all-embracing love, sexual, maternal, filial, social and destructive all at once.[1]

Sādhanā consists, fundamentally, of repeated rituals and carefully designed meditative activities, some of which will be described later on. The Tantrika has to lead a controlled life. For he knows that only wholehearted and continuous repetition of real acts, both physical and mental, can change his body and consciousness. Mere reading and thinking is no good at all. Tantra is not a belief or faith, but a way of living and acting. Indians have anyway enjoyed ritual since very ancient times. To repeat prescribed ceremonies gives them great satisfaction and a powerful assurance of their identity in their universe. Regular ritual is not for them the weary chore it can so easily become for the city-bred Westerner. Tantra like most other Indian cults, focuses all its interest on prescribed schemes of behaviour and imagery. Its texts are full of imperatives, which again some Westerners may find distasteful. The Sādhaka must do so and so; then he must do so and so, or before doing this he must do this, this and this. He has to stick to rigid laws and observance, avoiding certain things like the plague. In practice Tantra has never shown any interest in valuing and contemplating the continuously different forms produced by the creative play. [2] Tantra accepts the structure of the world as defined by an abstract universal pattern, semantically conditioned by abstract nouns. The prescribed methods are felt to be precious discoveries, related certainly to the limitations of Indian culture, which only a fool would question. If they are properly used a Sādhaka can reach bliss and release in a single lifetime. Among them are meditation, the cult of extreme feeling, aesthetic experience, sex, drugs magic and social action.[3]

One story famous among Tantrikas is given in two slightly differing versions the Rudrayamālā and the Brahmayamālā. It summarized many of the chief ideas behind the Tantra. Among them are that Tantra is a way superior to but not inconsistent with traditional ways; that is combines the virtues of different religious sects; that it seems scandalous to the conventional and that it deals in a special kind of ecstasy.[4]

The chief figure in the story is an Indian culture-hero called Vaśiṣṭha, who is the prototype of the Brāhmin sage and is said to have been son of the God Brahmā and teacher of the incarnate god Rāma. He was highly skilled in orthodox Hindu religion and philosophies. He is thus a very good symbol for all those in need of Tantra's lesson. The story describes how Vaśiṣṭha perfomed his orthodox meditations, with terrible asceticisms for six thousand years, trying to compel the great Goddess to show Herself to him,. He failed, and in a fury wanted to curse Her. His father told him not to, explaining that he had an altogether wrong idea of the Goddess. In reality, he told Vaśiṣṭha, she is the boundless material, brilliant as ten thousand suns, out of which every thing in the cosmos is made; she was herself the substance of the Buddha's enlightenment, kindly, loving and beautiful, Vaśiṣṭha tried again in a different spirit and in the end she appeared to him, in the bodily form of Sarasvatī the holiest Goddess of ancient Brāhmin Vedic wisdom – an appropriate iconic shape for a Brāhmin like him,. She told him he was still way off the proper track, and that he ought to learn the 'Kula' method of religion; that is, the Tantrik tradition. She said he could not hope to get anywhere by mere yoga and asceticism, not even to glimpse her proper feet. My worship, she said, is without austerity and pain!' He must go to Mahācina (probably somewhere in the Himalaya) and learn the proper forms. Then she dissolved herself back into space and time.

Vaśiṣṭha did as she said. But when he reached Mahācina he was horrified to recognize thee the great Hindu god Viṣṇu, incarnate as the Buddha, sitting among colleagues naked and red eyed, fuddled with drink. They were surrounded by beautiful women wearing jeweled belts and tinkling bells in their broad hips, with whom they continually had sexual intercourse, giving and taking great pleasure, Vaśiṣṭha made a great fuss and protested that this all went against every sacred teaching. But the Buddha pointed out to him that he was making a vulgar mistake and being deceived by outward appearance. The men and women involved were doing things that had been prepared for by prolonged ritual and meditation. In reality their outer actions were merely instruments to an intense inward vision, the women were images of the great Goddess Herself and there was no self indulgence involved. He then taught Vaśiṣṭha the special Kula yoga and ritual and the sage understood. He achieved his goal.

No one knows how old Tantra is. There are hints of it in India's oldest literature. The earlier surviving complete texts are Buddhist, and date to about AD 600. But there are many elements of what became Tantra in older Hindu and Buddhist scripture and later texts even refer to Tantra as 'Atharva Veda', thus identifying it as an aspect of the most ancient sacred and orthodox literature of Hinduism. There is Tantra which is Hindu, Buddhist and even, by stretching a point, Jaina. Since the Middle Ages it has flourished in many strata of Hindu society, notably in Bengal, Assam, Kasamir and parts of the South. It assimilated and occasionally combined with Muslim ideas, and traveled to many other countries of the East. It reached China during the eighth century, when there were tow major Tantrik Buddhist temples in the Tang capital. From these it was transported to Japan. It is likely that sexual rites, also familiar in Chinese Taosim, were used by these Tang Tantrik Buddhists. They certainly were by the Japanese Tachikawa sect which was founded in the twelfth century.[5] But in both China and Japan puritan Confucianism has expunged the memory and literature of sexual Tantra, leaving only a schematic psychological version. On the other hand, in Tibet Tantrik Buddhism flourished exceedingly from the seventh century into recent years, and Tibetan Tantra made its way into Mongolia, with occasional excursions into China. In Nepal Buddhist Tantra has flourished form early times, mingling with Hindu Tantra. In Southeast Asia Hindu Tantra was adopted in Cambodia and Java by AD 800, while Buddhist Tantra was probably known elsewhere in Southeast Asia.[6]

Tantra contains many archaic elements, some are as ancient as the Paleolithic caves of Europe, and can be precisely matched with them. The great French cave complex of Pech-merle, for example contains a chapel with triangular female emblems which can be duplicated closely at Indian shrines. There is not much profit, therefore, in arguing about the priority of one Tantrik sect or text over another; although, of course, historians must do so for their own purposes. The important point is that since the essential ingredients of Tantra are likely to be older than any of the individual Indian religious, there is nothing surprising in each of them developing a version of it, simply adapting the ingredients to its own world-picture. This also helps to explain why the careful linguistic analysis of terms which Agehananda Bhāratī has made was not more profitable. For at bottom Tantra is not a matter of rationalized terminology, but of inner facts of experience to which terms are only pointers; different terms may, may, and frequently do, indicate similar facts.

The important thing for us is that the archetypal elements in the cult may in Practice Bridge the gap enabling us to discover, and perhaps to try to vitalize in ourselves, the same kinds of experience, leaning to sue them for similar ends.

As we know it in relatively recent history, Tantra has been transmitted through family groups, down lines of pupil – teacher descent. Frequently the pupil has had to spend many years in search of his won personal and true teacher. It is said that only he who is fit for a teacher is able to find and recognize him. Since they were used either for explanation between teacher and pupil or for individual rites, most works of Tantra art fix into the modest person-to-person context. They are often on a small scale, executed in an immediate brushwork that makes no pretension to perfect finish. It is characteristic of this art that the artist always knew what he was going to make before he made it. Even the minor details were standardized and prescribed, and artists had learned what they should be by imitating them exactly from earlier work. The freehand directness of the styles was possible because the artist had himself made the same images with the same touches many times before. Colour was based on a standard repertoire of hues, all with their own definite significance.[7]

But though colours were used primarily for their conventional symbolic significance, in practice they also have powerful emotive effects. It is not a simple question of hue, saturation and density. The pigments used were chosen, and adopted as traditional, because their particular colour – inflections evoked the required emotive responses. These were not diluted in intensity or 'killed'; their force was always kept at its maximum. Further, such colours, combined as they often were to meet prescribed symbolism, were nevertheless also juxtaposed very skillfully in calculated quantities so as to produce definite but indescribable visual and emotive effects.

The figures represented Tantra art naturally share in the common heritage of Indian traditions. But Tantra was never concerned with imitating an external world; and so its figures are all to some degree stereotypes, puppets stimulating by their visual inadequacy a vigorous reinterpretation in the imagination of the mediator. They may embody almost geometric ideals of beauty and only in the Rajput paintings which preserve the fading influences of Islam and European sixteenth century art are there interpersonal dramas acted out between being who seem to be aware of each other's existence.

Tantra still exists as a living cult; and although it is endangered like so many other Indian institutions by the advance of Western mass conditioning and crudely quantified causal theories of man. Tantra may well be in a better position than most to survive, although it will certainly need adapting. Its vivid world of the creative imagination (using those words in their most serious sense) draws on the fabulous wealth of Indian myth and legend and weaves the elements together into a dense tissue of meaning. This could quire well be programmed to embrace the material science of the industrial world. Indeed, one branch of Tantra has always dealt with physics and medicine, as they were traditionally understood, so that it is quite possible to reconcile Tantra with, say, chemistry. What is not possible, however, is to reconcile Tantra with the ironical self-hatred, purely convergent thinking and closed mind common among workaday scientists. To a Tantrika the table of elements or the abstract forms of molecular structures and particle physics amount to revelations of the action of beloved devata and can be welcomed as such.

The Indian Tantrika knows his cult from the inside, as a code of rites and practices along with their explanations. Some he has done from childhood; others he may learn by seeking progressive initiations, according to his ambition. Most of these need not conflict with his carrying on a domestic life; in fact they can dignify and enhance that life by filling it with significance. But there are some men and women who may want to devote their whole lives to Tantrik Sādhanā; such people can take vows which involve leaving home, perhaps joining an asram or an order. Then they will start more intensive rituals. And although most Tantrikas have been born into their tradition it has been quite common for converts to gain initiation. Some of the most famous Bengali poets were converts. And the Kasmiri Abhinavagupta, one of the greatest philosophers of India, who made what may be the most important individual contribution to the world's aesthetic theory, traveled to Bengal to be initiated into the Kula Tantra.

We know tantra nowadays from the manuscript texts called Tantras, in Sanskrit or vernacular languages. Only a few of those surviving have been published; fewer still translated. They seem to have been published; fewer still translated. They seem to have been composed at different times and places in India, more or less as encyclopedias of Tantrik ritual and philosophy and to have been copied and added to many times over. The earliest were put together before AD 6000, but some of the most important and influential during the later Middle Ages and at the command of Rajput princes. They are never actually given hard dates, so chronology is usually a matter of internal evidence and that is none too reliable anyway, since the compiles borrowed freely from one another.

Some Tantras carry more authority than others with different groups of Tantrikas. The most generally authoritative among Hindu Tantras are, perhaps, the Śaktisaṃgama, the Kulārṇava, the Mahānirvāṇa and the Tantrarāja. Some are more inclined towards philosophy, some to magic, others to the science of sound. Some are more flamboyant and extreme than others. There are also important abbreviations or summaries, often in the form of hymns, like the Karpuradiṣtotram or the Ānandalaharī. Most of them set out, as we have seen, to be inclusive, combining into their symbolic structure ancient Vedic rituals along with secratian deities and popular legends. Everything is grist to their mill; for they take it for granted that Truth can be indicated by many different symbolic combinations. From one text to another there is no particular consistency of system or names. Virtually all of them insist that there are parts of the ritual which can never be put down in writing and that Tantra can never be learned from books, but only from a competent teacher, or guru. A few use code-language from crucial passages. Virtually all use symbolisms which can only be partly understood by an outsider who is prepared to pursue them down to their roots in Indian life and culture. To the Tantrika, however, the whole point of his rites is that the symbolisms of which they are composed open in his won mind vistas of feeling and meaning which change him, obliterating his materialist view of the world. This demands that, as he performs them, he has to contemplate what he is doing with total awareness. It is true that many Indian customs are now carried out in perfunctory and formal spirit. But a genuine Tantrika knows he will get nowhere if he runs through his ceremonials in an empty and half-hearted way.

How the west has learned about Tantra has its own history. The most important figure in that history is Sir John Woodroffe, a Justice of the High Court of India at Calcutta during the last decade of the nineteenth century. He devoted his personal life to publishing Tantras, speaking and writing extensively about Tantra under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon. Tantra owes more to his advocacy than to the work of any other single man. He was writing for a double audience: there were the Europeans deeply infected with Victorian prudery and then there were the English speaking Indians who were mostly under the influence of their caste prejudices, ashamed and violently critical of elements in their won culture and hence anxious to seem even more puritan than their Western rulers. Arthur Avalon devoted an enormous amount of effort to explaining and justifying the element of carnal enjoyment in Tantrik practices, wrapping it up in lurid warnings against taking them as mere bestial pleasure. He was driven by a quite genuine fear of being misunderstood by his audience into implying, without perhaps actually stating it in so many words, that no good Tantrika actually enjoys the ritual. He included extensive quotations from Tantra warning that only he who has totally conquered passion and desire is entitled to participate in the rites during which cooked hog-flesh, wine and sexual intercourse (even more abhorrent) were 'indulged in'. It is of course true that the purpose of Tantrik ritual is far from being carnal indulgence, as will be abundantly clear from what follows. But we must also remember: first, that Avalon was standing out against a vocal alliance between an Indian caste elite and Western missionaries who were aiming to get Tantra outlawed (he was, of course, a lawyer); and second, that the published Tantras as we know them have already been filtered, often many times, through the minds of high-caste Indian editors who have written something of their own prejudices into the very text of many of the Tantras, often additing long sections specially emphasizing that social and philosophical conformity which as much concerned their caste. Other European scholars have even been guilty of bowdlerizing their translations, which Avalon, much to his credit did not.

As which so many other religions we must, for our own purposes, learn to distinguish between what in these texts is conditioned by local, historical and cultural factors, and what general value. The letter we can assimilate without prejudice into our own outlook. In fact enjoyment (bhoga) is the essence of Tantra, as has been explained; and that kind of enjoyment can only be the direct function of desire of some kind. Tantrik desire and enjoyment, therefore, may be defined as transformations of raw, sensuous material. No Tantra rite can work, though, unless the enjoyment and desire are there. It is absurd to pretend that such a rite can be undertaken in the spirit of mere cold duty. To begin with, no man can get the necessary erection for a sexual rite unless birth his body can be possessed with normal instinctual response and he can expect on the basis of past experience, that the desire will be consummated in some way. True Tantrikas have always known and declared that the strength and success of their rituals depend on vividly intense and directly physiological arousal. This many writers on Tantra still attempt to suppress.

A related fact that tends to be forgotten in what scholars have written about Tantra is that many of its practices were deliberately intended to breach the caste system. A number of the elements that Tantrik rites involve were aimed directly at her heart of Hindu social prejudice and Buddhist Tantra had its own version of social iconoclasm. The meaning here, of course, is that a pride in social identity and virtue is the most insidious and crippling of all the mental block on the road to release. The Tantrika has to commit himself to acts which destroy any vestiges of social status and self-esteem. Older Westerners have been inclined to overlook this aspect of Tantra; members of the Alternative Society may find it especially interesting. And once again, we can discover how the 'official' caste outlook has even been written into many of the texts. For it seems that Brāhmin editors may have tired to present some rites as if they were occasional formalities which did nor really alter the social status quo, instead of as the drastic purges of personal commitment they were meant to be. Anyone who actually carries Tantra to its ultimate degree, as real devotes must, can only end up a scandalous outcast. We catch sufficient glimpses from Indian history to be quite sure of the truth of the matter.

What is known of folk cult and custom among the vast populations of ancient India also corroborates the suggestion that the literary record, which has always been complied by literate Brāhmins, needs a good deal of supplementation to say the least. There would have been no need for the many dire warnings uttered by puritan apologists for Tantra against the danger in orgies perpetrated by 'low-class' people in the name of religion, unless such orgies did in fact take place. Popular religion on India has always made a special feature of orgiastic behaviors; and there is plenty of evidence that various forms of Tantra contain echoes of the same ancient theories as those on which such behavior was based.[8]

There are vital differences at the practical, as well as the theoretical, level between Buddhist and Hundu Tantra, which will be brought out later in this survey. It is chiefly the Buddhist who insist upon these difference, fro reasons the their own. Indeed Tibetan Buddhists, whose Tantra came from India in the early Middle Ages, now seem to wish to dissociate themselves entirely from what they know of Hindu Tantra, even though their won original Tantra contained many Hindu ingredients. Their special reasons are bound up both with their own racial inheritance and perhaps with Chinese infiltration. So there is sample justification for presenting Tantras as the Indian phenomenon it originally was and still is today.

Its history is tied up with accidents in the survival of manuscripts, with the travels of individual masters, with the extreme secrecy Tantrikas have generally preserved and with the history of India itself. As a consequence the important Hindu Tantra of Bengal and Bihar, where Buddhism was obliterated about AD 1200, retains and makes its won sense of many Buddhist elements. Indeed one Bengali Hindu Tantra is called after an early medieval Buddhist goddess still known in Tibet, Tārābhaktisuddharṇava, 'The pure ocean of adoration of Tārā' – a goddess who also plays a role in the Hindu cosmic system of devata.

The literature of Tantras is not as universally popular and authoritative as is that else of sacred writings of the Hindu which pass under the appellation of the Purāṇas. Its reputation has not traveled far and wide for none amongst this Western Scholars has failed any attention to this Department of Sanskrit literature. Many Indian scholars of repute are of the opinion that the Tantras are purely the production of soil of Bengal. The peculiar practices and rites of the followers of Tantrik religion which superficially appear abhorrent and disreputable have stood much in the way of the spread of its reputation and name. No form of religion has escaped the hands of corruption and superstition and that has also been the case win Tantrik religion. But to consider impartially it yield sin me gist and excellence to no other department of ancient Hindu thought.[9]

Our land of Bengal used to be ruled by Tantrik works such as the *Śaradātilaka*, *Śāktanandatarangiṇī*, *Praṇatosinī*, *Tantrasāra* etc. Therefore Mahānirvāṇa tantra did not have so great an influence. It seems to us that considering the form into which on a result of English education and culture the mind of Bengal people has been shaped, the Mahānirvāṇa is a proper Tantra for the firm. Raja Rammohanroy endeavoured to encoùrage regard for Mahānirvāṇa tantra became he understood it. The Tantra embodies the old religion (Dharma) of Bengal even if it is to be cost away for good that ought only to be done after it has been fully known.

It is accepted that Energy (Śakti) as the worshippers of Śakti are called. But they add that such energy is only a limited manifestation is mind and matter of the almighty infinite Supreme flower – Mahāśakti of becoming in That (Tat) which is unitaning being sat, (itself).[11] Their doctrine is to be found in the tradition oral and written, which are contained in Āgamas which with purāṇa, Smṛti and Veda constitute one of the four great classes of Scripture of the Hindus. The Tantras are scripture of the Āgama. The nations that may are some queer bye product of Hindusim and not an integral part of it is erroneous. The three chief divisions of the Āgama are locally named Bengal. It is however, little known that Kashmir was in the past a land where Tantrik chine and practice were widely followed. [12]

The communities of so called Tantrik worshiper are fivefold according as the cult of Sun, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti. To the knower, however his five named are not distinct Divinities, but different aspects of one power or Śakti. An instructed Śakti worshiper is one of his least sectarian of men. He can worship in all temples, as the saying is. Thus the Saṃohan Tantra says that he is a fool who sees any difference between Rāma (incarnation of Viṣṇu) and Śiva." Satcakraṇīrupaṇa commentator describes, 'What matters the name after running through the gamut of them. The Śākta is so called because the chosen Deity of his worship (1st Devatā) is Śakti. The Śaiva is so called because his chosen divinity is Śiva, The name for the Changeless aspect of the one whose focused of action and activity is Śakti. But as the two are necessarily associated all communities acknowledge Śakti. It is for the mentioned reason, a mistake to suppose that a Tantrik or follower of the Āgama is necessarily a Śākta and that the Tantra is a Śākta, called Tantras is a Śākta scripture only. Not at all, the Śākta is only are branch of Agamik school. And so we find the scriptuer of Śaivsim whether of north or south called Tantras as also nose of the ancient form of vaiṣṇavism which is called the Pancarātra. The doctrine of these communities, which share certain common ideas, vasies from the monism of his Śākta and northern Śaivas to the more of less dualistic systems of others. Śākta doctrine and practice are centrained primarilhy in the Śākta Tantras and the oral traditions, some of which are secret. As the Tantras are mainly scripture of worship such doctrine is contained by implication in his ritual for reasons ashore stated recourse may be had to other scripture in so far as they share with these of Śākta certain common doctreines and practices. The Tantra proper is the word of Śiva and Śakti. But there are also valuable Tantrik works in the nature of Compendia and commentaries which are not of divine authorship.[13]

Indeed the Āgama has rightly been equaled within Tantra. It is a significant and well weighted observation supported by reliable data of the literary Tantra that at the time, when chapters as vows, worship etc. first began to the included in the Purāṇa. The Tantra elements were eliminated in these texts as for as possible. The obvious reason for this phenomena's won that the Tantras, especially the vaiṣṇava Āgamas (*Pancarātra* and *vaikhanāsā*) and Śaiva Āgamas (Paśupata and Śaiva siddhānta etc.) recommended ideas and practices defying his vedic practices under the custody of the Brāhmanical circles. Consequenty Āgamas and Purāṇas could hardly be placed on amicable ground and Tantrik element can clearly be delineated at least in the early chapters of the Purāṇas.[14]

Kane comes forwarded with a better alternative suggestion that the Tantrikas and the Matsyas both developed their magic rites from the syenayaga mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas and Srauta Sūtras.[15] However, we cannot summarily reject the obseavation of Hazra that by the beginning of his early medieval purāṇa Texts began to recognize the tantras as one the authorities on religion matters.[16]

The concept of a female principles (Pṛakrti) along with a male (Puruṣa) is a fundamental doctrine of Tantricism. In spite of wives of the Sun God, Samjina, Chāyā, Śuvarcalā, Rajnī, Nikśumbha etc. – there is no Sautra Śakti Umā of Tantrik Śaivsim and Prajñā of Tantrik Buddhism. It appears that the Sun worship in later stages came to the influenced by Tantric. Cism only outwardly in rural practices. The analysis of the Śāmbha Purāṇas in details leads in to the conclusion that tantricism of the Sun-Cult are developed in the later Purāṇa in early medieval and medieval India has distinctly more than one variety. The concept of Śiva-Śakti is traceable in both traditions but the difference lies in the fact that in the Tantra of earlier variety Śakti has been developed symbiologically around heat, light and rays of the Sun-God, not around female consent of Sūrya, shile in late variety Śakti has been developed around Śiva-Śakti.[17]

Thus it is accepted that Śaivism especially in the north of India is closely related to the trend known as Tantric philosophy and tractions of Tantrik philosophy claim that there tradition is in full confirmedly with vedic culture through some orthodox thinker seem to think that the Tantrik philosophy and practices are opposed to the vedic tradition. The Tantric world view affirms the importance of the world and of life and regards them as paths to attain moksa or liberation.

Bhoga yugāyate saḳsat Patakam sakṛtayate,
Moksāyate va same sanam kurladharme kuleśvarī.[18]

It is because of this life affirming tendency that tantra appeals more to some people than the Vedānta.

In fact all those doctrines familiar to the traditional Hinduism are also accepted by the Tantra farm affinduism except the following:

A. Śiva with his consort Śakti is accepted as the only reality, śaiva – śakti is used in a hyphenated form symbolically. Śiva-Śakti is represented as a lingaṁ in the yoni. It has to be noted that Śaivism in all its forms accepts this. Symbol and almost in all the temples in various parts of India from Srinagar in Kashimir to Rameśvaram in South and from Somnath in Gujrat to the golden temples of Śiva in Kāśī (Varanasi). Śiva is worshipped only in phallic form. The Śiva-Śakti form is not peculiar only to tantric Hinduism.[19]

B. In general in Śaivite worship in almost all traditions the caste factor in pushed to eh background. Many of the priests in Śaivite temples in the south as also many of their Saints (The Nayanars) come from non-uratinins communities. This is true also of temples dedicated to Kālī or Durgā or Śakti and of the temples of skanda, muruga or subrahmanya the purānic son of Śiva. Except for the inclusion of his so called Dalits in saivite tradition caste destructions have not played any role at all. In the rituals of Śakti worship the caste factors is almost completely eliminated and all worshippers have a caste less identity of their own.

C. In Śakti worship women enjoy an equal states with men the congregation is mixed and modes of worship are the some. The Tantrik thinkers claim that all barriers including that of dress is broken order to introduce a castless, society free from any discrimination of sex, colour, caste, belief or social status.

According to Raman it is concluded that –

1. The Tantra is its philosophical aspect is not much different from other seats of Śaivism, the difference if any consists mainly in emphasizing Śakti the will or powers of Śiva . In practice some of the forms of Śākta worship are subject to serious objections. The first of these is the practice of animal sacrifice. Thus Śāktism shows a marked difference from other forms of Śaivism offer of animals in sacrifice that of birds, goats and buffaloes is still practiced in some temples dedicated to Śakti or mother-Goddess.
2. Tantric practices have been identified with superstition and magical rites, which to not find a place in traditional Hinduism. Performance of their magical rites with there totems and taboos is more associated with savage culture and have tarnished the spiritual image of Hinduism.
3. Worship of Śakti in the form of orgies, especially sexual orgies are characteristics of Śāktism. Till recently such practices use common amongst the so called Vāma-panthis. The radical extremists among the Śāktas, and the temple of Kamakhyā in Assam was one of the famous centers of these radicals. This temple historically a very ancient one (9th and 10th Century) was the centers for performance of these rituals. Indeed the Tantrik theory of creation is thus at one with that of Sāṃkhya. Pṛakrti is the material cause of the universe. It is the creative energy of God the first cause from which everything has proceeded. The only difference is that according to tantrik system Pṛakrti is more popularly the names of the Goddess whereas Sāṃkhya, it is the first creative energy. As in

> Sāṃkhya so in Tantra creation proceeds from an union between nature (Pṛakrti) and Puruṣa (soul). This union between nature and soul is thus symbolically described in tantras.

In this present monograph the subject wise various factors, Tantras Traditional and modern concept and Tantrik tradition with special reference to mahāvidyās ten is number with historical development and art are dealt with explaining the references of varied illustrations.

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Chapter 2

TANTRA – TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CONCEPT

Tantra is a complex tradition, interwoven with the spiritual teachings of India and beyond, going back far into ancient history. The popular understanding of Tantra in the West today represents only a part of this vast system of knowledge. Tantra in the West has come to be associated with special sexual practices, with the worship of the Goddess, with Kuṇḍalinī and the cakras, with a life and body affirmative approach to the spiritual path, and with a temperament that is artistic and dramatic rather than ascetic and otherworldly. It is sometimes associated with all that is exotic, dramatic, or dangerous in spiritual practices. While there is some validity to this perception, it does not comprehend all the aspects of the Tantric tradition, nor reveal its essence.

We may compare the state of Tantra in the West with that of Yoga, with which it is related. Like Tantra, the physical side of Yoga is emphasized – the practice of yogic postures or āsansas – even though these represent a small part of classical Yoga, whose main concern is meditation. We live in a materialistic age wherein spiritual traditions are recast or scaled down into a physical model. While this can be a helpful way of introducing teachings in today's cultural setting and certainly enriches our healing systems, it does not reveal the true scope or intention of these teachings.

Tantra and the New Age

Recent popular or New Age spirituality in America looks in many respects like a new form of Tantra, making use of both its occult and spiritual sides. New Age spirituality includes the exploration of a whole range of energetic practices via the body, senses and mind, both for achieving personal and spiritual goals, as well as a recognition of the Goddess. It appears to be an extension of Tantric openness and experimentation into the technological age.

Many of the new spiritual and occult teachings of this century in the West have a strong influence from Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism – particularly the yogic traditions – and thereby show an influence of Tantra, which is an important aspect of these systems. Many are based on Theosophy and Alice Bailey, who borrow directly from Hindu and Buddhist teachings, including the Vedas, *Purāṇas* and *Tantras*. Others use Native American paths which have much in common with Oriental teachings like Tantra. There is similarly an interest in Shamanism, whose ritualistic side resembles Tantras. In addition is a renewed interest in the older mystic traditions of Europe and the West – Christian mysticism, alchemy and astrology, Kabbala or Sūfism – which appear to have more in common with Oriental teachings like Tantra than with their own orthodox counterparts. This trend includes a renewed interest in pagan European traditions, which have many affinities culturally and historically with the Vedic and the Tantric.[1]

However, while there are many positive trends in this phenomenon, much more development is needed in order to make these new approaches into a serious tradition. We are still in the initial stages, exhibiting the creativity, confusion and chaos of a new birth. Not infrequently the more superficial, preliminary, or sensate side of these teachings are emphasized, with appeals to fantasy, self-indulgence and entertainment. The experiential and deeper spiritual side of the teachings is thereby misrepresented or missed altogether.

In addition, we have a syncretic predilection and like to combine various teachings and traditions together. This reflects the breaking down of barriers which is part of the global age that is beginning to dawn. While such open-mindedness is helpful in expanding our horizons, it is not without its limitations. Trying too quickly to combine spiritual teachings and traditions can be like tying to grow oranges, apples and bananas on the same tree – while it sounds like a good idea, it cannot work. A spiritual teaching develops organically and cannot be artificially combined with another, even with good intentions. A sampling or preliminary exploration of different teachings should not be equated with a real understanding growing out of serious practice. There may be any number of good spots to dig a well, but only if one digs deeply in a single place will one really find water – and only if one digs in a place where there is water.

Yet such difficulties should not invalidate the trend to return to an experiential form of spirituality, which is what is really motivating us toward yogic traditions, including Tantra. This movement must ultimately lead us to a comprehensive and global spiritual tradition that integrates ancient and Oriental spirituality into the modern world while purifying it of its cultural dross. Such a new tradition may not necessarily be called Tantra (and the name is not important), but it will have a strong Tantric element. However, some decades or even generations may be required for this new trend to be fashioned into a genuine tradition. To aid in its development a more serious and self-disciplined approach is required, and one that is based on a real understanding of the existing traditions.

Tantra and Sex

For most people in the Western world, Tantra means sex. Tantra is commonly associated with special sexual practices, different sexual postures, and sexual rituals. This does represent an aspect of Tantra and of Hindu thought, such as in found in the *Kāma Sūtra,* the Hindu manual of sexual love. While some Tantric teachings mention such practices, they are not necessary parts of nor the main focus of Tantric Yoga, which like all true yogic traditions, centers on mantra and meditation. Many Tantric texts contain no references to sexual practices. Others mention them as preliminaries or as only one possible line of approach. Yet others regard them as mere metaphors or symbols. The broad approach of Tantra contains ways to turn all ordinary activities – including breathing, eating and sleeping – into rituals or sacred actions, but this does not mean that Tantra is promoting such activities for ordinary gratification.

Though Tantra does contain sexual Yogas, it is wrong to thing that Tantra is characterized by them. In the same light Tantric art, which has an erotic appearance, is meant as a depiction of the higher forces of consciousness through which the primal forces of life can be transformed. It is not a glorification of ordinary sexuality, thought it is unafraid of this force and is able to see the cosmic power working behind it.

Non-Sexual Tantra

Tantric teachings are an integral part of the monastic and ascetic traditions of India. There is a strong Tantric side to the Vedāntic Swami orders, which involves the worship of the Goddess and the Sri Yantra: Most Hindu āṣrams and monasteries conduct regular forms of Tantric worship. Śaṇkarācārya (c. 500 AD), the founder of the Vedāntic monastic orders, was himself a great Tantric adept, yogi and devotee of the Goddess, though he was also a sage and philosopher of the Absolute.[2]

In India a Tantric master usually means a person who is a master of mantra or an energetic type of Yoga practice and does not connote one who is adept at sexual practices. Great Tantric teaches include figures like Śaṇkara, Ramakrishna and Nityananda, who were life-long celibates.

Yet this does not mean that one has to be celibate to benefit from Tantra. Tantra is not characterized by sexuality or its negation, but by various energetic approaches like mantra and yantra which can be applied on many levels and which provide tools for people of all temperaments and capacities. Tantra emphasized methodologies of transforming energies and is not concerned with either suppression or ordinary indulgence through which energy is dissipated.

Sexuality and Liberation

The spiritual traditions of India – whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain – emphasize transmiting sexual energy because sex is the core energy of our existence. This has created two approaches. The first is a enunciate tradition in which all sexual activity is voluntarily given up. The second is a householder tradition is which moderation in sexuality is practiced.

The Householder tradition may include sexual yoga practices, though seldom the graphic kind depicted in modern Western books on Tantra. It also aims at sustaining the social order through the family system, and thereby emphasizes sexual purity and loyalty. While the renunciant tradition is generally thought to be more direct because it allows the aspirant to focus entirely on practice, this is only a general rule. Many great yogīs have come from householder traditions, and many Vedic ṛṣis were married and had children. According to the Hindu tradition, human beings can live a householder life and fulfill their social and family duties and still achieve liberation. [3]

While the renunciant tradition is generally more direct, it is more strenuous, and is the exception rather than the rule in all times and cultures, even those eras which are enlightened. It is a particularly difficult path in the modern age and in the Western world where there is no cultural tradition to support it. In this regard Yoga never encourages us to merely repress ourselves, though it does encourage self-discipline and says that we never need to how down to the forces of desire. Yoga is part of an organic process of higher evolution whereby we naturally come to transcend our outer limitations into a state of inner freedom and contentment. It does not tell us that we must give up what provides us with happiness, but suggests that we should consider where our real happiness comes from. True happiness resides in consciousness, not in any material form, identify, or activity.

The yoga tradition does not reject sexual energy as evil, bad, or shameful. Celibacy is only recommended along with spiritual practices to transmute that energy for usage on another level. Without meditation practices the Yoga tradition considers tht celibacy may be harmful because the unused energy can stagnate and cause various physical and emotional problems. Yet without some control of sexual energy there will not be the power necessary to do higher meditation practices.

Tantra and the Body

Tantra affirms the importance of the body as a temple for the Divine and grants it a sacred reality. It views our psycho-physical organism as a microcosm in which the individual soul can understand the workings of the entire universe. For this reason Tantra has been regarded as a body-of-formative form of spiritual tradition, as opposed to teachings which negate the body. However Tantra does not affirm ordinary bodily identity, but sees the body as a mystic symbol. Yoga and Vedānta, which have been criticized as being against the body or anti-life, do not condemn the body either; they only negate attachment to the body and the sense of bodily identity. Yoga looks upon the body as a temple for the Divine and as a mirror of the universe. On the other hand, ordinary people who affirm the body as the means to ultimate happiness end up abusing the body in order to achieve pleasures that are never really fulfilling anyway.

The body is the best vehicle nature can provide to aid us in our spiritual growth and is a great symbol for the different levels and powers of the cosmos. However, the body is not our true Self. The body is subject to disease, decay and death and cannot possibly provide lasting happiness, which can never be found in anything transient. However marvelous a vehicle the body may be and however much we can learn from it, there is no more bodily fulfillment than there is fulfillment for our automobile, which like the body is an instrument of experience but not our true identity.

We should respect the body and care for it properly because it is our means of gaining experience and enlightenment,. Without energy and sensitivity in the body we cannot go far on the spiritual path. There is a natural intelligence in the body that shows us how to use it in the right way. This intelligence, which is part of the cosmic mind, reveals itself when we no longer use the body to pursue personal desires but as an instrument of developing higher awareness. The truth is that we are inherently happy and free as conscious beings, even without a body. Supreme happiness lies in being who we really are which is not mere flesh but pure awareness. Hence the idea that Tantra is body-affirmative can be misleading and should be understood only in the sense that Tantra regards the body as a sacred ground for the Divine Self to be realized.

Tantra and the Reality of the World

Along with the idea that Tantra is body-affirmative is the idea that Tantra is world-affirmative and Tantric philosophy grants a reality to the external world which is not found in other systems. According to this view there is an inherent opposition between Tantra and systems that negate the world (and the body) as unreal. Some Tatntric teachings do give more reality to the world of manifestation than the Māyāvadic or illusionist view of non-dualistic (Advaita) Vedānta, which state the world is unreal and god is the only reality. Typical in this respect is Kashmir Śaivism. However, the Tantric systems which affirm the reality of the world, affirm its reality as consciousness and are quite removed from modern materialistic conceptions.

Contrary to this view of Tantras as world-affirmative, we should note that the predominant form of Tantra in India today – the worship of the Goddess through the Śṛi Cakra – is generally presented from the perspective of non-dualistic Vedānta. Many great proponents of world negating Vedānta have been Tantric masters. Most notable is Śaṇkarācārya, the greatest of the Vedāntic philosophers, who wrote many famous Tantric works on the worship of the Divine Mother (for example *Saundarya Lahari)*.[4]

The Śākta tradition itself (the tradition that worships the Goddess or Śakti) is generally Advaitic and Māyāvadic and asserts that the world is unreal. The *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, one of the most important Tantric works on the worship of the Goddess, gives such a teaching. This is unlike the Srimad Bhāgavatam of the Vaiśṇavis (worshippes of Viṣṇu), which follows a dualistic (dvaita) view of creation. As Vaiṣṇava teachings grant reality to the outer world we can see that this view has never been regarded as the sole property of Tantra.

There is nothing in Tantra which is inherently opposed to world-negation approaches, nor is there anything in world-negation approaches that is inherently opposed to Tantra. There is also a strong Tantric tradition of world negation. In the world-negation traditions the Goddess herself is worshipped as the Supreme self or Absolute beyond all manifestation.

Tantra and Emotions

There is a trend today, particularly in psychological circles, to emphasize the value of expressing emotions or reliving powerful emotional experiences and traumas. This is to counter a cultural tendency to suppress emotions and to deny our feelings. Tantra looks upon emotions as tools for spiritual growth. Hence Tantra has been regarded as affirming the validity of emotions, as compared with traditional spiritual teachings which negate emotion.

However, traditional Tantra does not encourage mere emotional expression, which only causes greater attachment to emotions and through them to the outer world. Tantra regards emotions as trapped energy and seeks the release of that energy, in which the form of the emotion subsides like a wave into the sea of awareness. This process occurs when we recognize that emotions are various cosmic energies limited and broken up by patterns of attachment. Tantra uses forms of the Gods and Goddesses – like peaceful or wrathful deities – to help us contact the cosmic meaning of emotion, which is just a force of nature. Seeing the Divine energy, or play of consciousness, inherent in emotion, we discover emotion as a means of relating to the Divine within us. While Tantra does not deny emotion, it should not be associated with mere emotionalism but with the alchemy of transmuting human emotions into Divine energies through developing devotion. Tantra does not emphasize the personal expression of emotions but the understanding of emotion as a play of consciousness.

Nor do traditional or so-called ascetic yogic approaches simply suppress or deny emotion or any other force of nature, which cannot be a means of liberation for anyone. It is not emotion or any aspect of energy in itself that Yoga seeks to negate but the ego, which is the selfish appropriation, and therefore abuse, of the beneficent energies of life. Yoga does not encourage suppressing anything that is natural to us, but discovering our true nature in which we can naturally let go of all attachments and dependencies.

Indeed, Tantra does have a bad reputation in a number of spiritual circles. This is largely owing to the excesses of Tanta which can include unusual sexual practices, intoxicants, magical practices to inflict harm or take control of other people, and other methods considered to be impure. For this reason many teachers – including some who have been true Tantric teachers – have avoided using the name Tantra. They may perfect to emphasize Vedic, Yogic or Vedāntic traditions that include Tantra but are not tarnished by its misconceptions. Swami Vivekananda himself – the first major figure to bring Yoga and Vedānta to the West a hundred years ago – was careful to avoid introducing Tantric concepts to Western audiences, though he was familiar with tem from his own teacher Ramakrishna, who was a Tantric adept. This was not only to avoid offending the Victorian mind but to avoid appealing to the sensate side of the modern mind, which was also in evidence in his time.

Tantra and the Worship of the Goddess

Tantra is associated with the worship of the Goddess, the feminine aspect of Divinity, and this is one of its prime features. Tantra provides a whole spiritual science for the worship of the Divine Mother, not merely a set of beliefs or dogmas but a practical way of developing our higher awareness through her wisdom and her grace. For those seeking to understand the religion of the Divine Mother, Hindu Tantra is perhaps the best key.

Yet there are also Tantric teachings which focus on Śiva, Viṣṇu and other Gods and in which the Goddess does not play a central role. Tantra is not limited to Goddess worship, and some form of Goddess worship is found in all the traditions of India going back to the most ancient Vedic. It is not unique to the Tantric.

Traditional Tantra gives reverence to both male and female powers and affirms that the God and Goddess go together, support each other, and should be worshipped together. Along with the Goddess is her consort, the great God, Lord Śiva. Their children – Gaṇeśa and Skanda – play an important part, as do the deities of the Hindu pantheon, which are all related to each other.

Sex and the Goddess

Traditional Tantra gives reverence to the Cosmic Feminine in all her forms up to pure consciousness itself, which has feminine qualities of receptivity, loving kindness and compassion. Tantra views the feminine as the embodiment of wisdom and the energy of consciousness, and the masculine force as being, will and perception.

The Goddess possesses all forms of beauty, including that of the world of Nature, up to the highest beauty, which is pure consciousness. In fact wherever there is beauty in form it is only owing to its pervasion by some quality of the Goddess. Nature herself, with the beauty of the flowers, forests, mountains, ocean, and sky is the dance of the Goddess. While sexual beauty is one aspect of her delight – and that most evident in the human world – the purpose of Tantra is into being us in contact with the reality of the Goddess directly within ourselves, whereby we can experience her ultimate beauty in our own minds. The Goddess is much more than sexuality, though sexuality can be used as a metaphor for her qualities. The Goddess is the bliss of Being, and we can never be content unless we realize this joy within our own hearts.

Tantra and Kuṇḍalinī

Kuṇḍalinī often translated as the "serpent power," is a term which has gained some recognition today, particularly in yogic and New Age circles, though it is seldom properly understood. Kuṇḍalinī literally means a coiled-up energy or the power that dwells in a cave (kuṇḍa). For any transformation to be possible, an energy is needed to bring it about. For the transformation of consciousness a special and powerful energy is needed. This is Kuṇḍalinī.

Tantra presents a whole yogic and mantric science for developing Kuṇḍalinī. However, this Tantric science has its foundation or parallels in Vedic, Vedāntic and Yoga texts that speak of the transforming word (vak), the energy of consciousness (chit-śakti), or the power of knowledge (jnāna-śakti), which are all synonyms fro Kunḍalinī.[5]

The traditional role of Kunḍalinī is different than the way in which it is generally viewed today, which is to regard it as a mere force to control and harness. Kunḍalinī is a form of the Goddess and should be worshipped as her power. It is not some psychic energy to be aroused but a Divine energy to be revered. Efforts to manipulate Kunḍalinī through willful practice or forceful techniques are not only dangerous, but fail to recognize the reality of the Goddess and are contrary to her worship.

Many yogīs, including Tantrics, may use no specific practices or Purāṇic manipulations to arouse the Kunḍalinī. The arousing of the Kunḍalinī can occur through intense devotion or profound meditation and does not require the use of specific Yoga techniques. Higher direct realization or knowledge approaches may not even mention the term Kunḍalinī. Energy always follows consciousness and does not have to be approached as an end in itself. On the other hand, if we pursue energy apart from consciousness we may gain power, but, as it is not under the control of awareness, it is likely to have undesirable side-effects.

When Yoga techniques are used to arouse the Kunḍalinī – and they are often very helpful – they should be done as part of a practice of surrender to the Divine or inquiry into the Self-nature. Without this basis they cannot be done correctly. The yoga student should first have a background in meditation, control of the senses, and an understanding of the workings of the mind before trying to arouse the Kunḍalinī.

Tantra and Art

Tantra is allied with all forms of art in India. As the Goddess is the Divine Word, Tantra is closely associated with the tradition of Sanskrit poetry, and the entire tradition of Sanskrit leaning and literature has a strong Tantric imprint. Stories of Śiva and Devī (the Goddess), popular in Tantric teachings, are the basis of Indian music and dance. Śiva is known as Naṭarāj or the lord of the Dance. The Goddess has her own special gentle dance called the lasya. Indian art, including painting, sculpture and architecture, has a basis in Hindu mythology which Tantra shares. The many images and statues found in Hindu temples are fashioned and worshipped according to the rules prescribed in Tantric texts.

Today we need to recreate a more dharma-oriented artistic tradition and bring back the use of the image, icon and a way of sacred art. Tantric art can show us how to do this. But the artistic side of Tantra has its discipline. It is not a tradition without rules, or one that approves of anything dramatic, sensational, novel or unconventional as art. Tantra provides a structured and orderly conception of aft based upon an understanding of the occult and spiritual laws of the universe. [6]

Tantra and Science

Tantra is a kind of science, a way of knowledge both for understanding the outer world and the inner psyche. Tantra is based on and closely allied with the various traditional sciences of India, of which the two most notable are Āyurveda (Vedic medicine) and astrology

(Jyotiṣa). In addition some modern scientists find the energetic concepts of Tantra to be similar to their own discoveries.

Tantra is allied with the alchemical traditions found throughout the medieval world, including china, India the Middle East and Europe. In fact, much of what has been called alchemy is simply Tantra as a global tradition. In this regard Tantra is nothing new, but the revival of the old alchemical and hermetic approach which is the basis of much of European mysticism.

The alchemical tradition exists within contemporary Ayurveda, which uses special preparations or alchemical forms of sulphur, mercury, mica and other minerals. Ayurveda uses Tantric practices as part of its treatment for mental health, as well as for rejuvenation. Both Tantra and Ayurveda are becoming popular in the modern world; their connections will be discussed in the third section of this book.

Tantric practices are timed accordingly to the rules of Hindu astrology. Symbolism based on Hindu astrology occurs in many Tantric teachings. Tantric methods – including rituals, mantras and gems – are also used for balancing planetary influences as part of astrology. Hindu astrology includes palmistry and other forms of divination, many of which came to Europe along with the gypsies, who originated in India. These are also part of Tantric science which seeks to unlock the underlying laws of life.

Tantric science thus includes spiritual, occult and material sciences and is a possible model for the holistic science that the coming global age demands.

Traditional Hindu Tantra

Hindu Tantra is a complex system of spiritual knowledge, an integral part of Hindu spirituality and the traditions of the Himalayan region. Yet Hinduism is not a religion in Western sense of a belief-oriented system emphasizing one book, prophet or church. Hinduism is not an exclusive belief which says that other religions are false, but an open spiritual tradition that accepts all useful practices and insights and which encourages diversity, innovation and individual freedom. The correct name for Hinduism is Sanatana Dharma, which means the "eternal truth or law," referring to a teaching not based on a particular savior, scripture, or historical revelation but a living enfoldment of eternal truth relative to constantly changing human conditions.

Hindu Tantra, like the Hindu tradition itself, contains many teachings, including some which are variant, alternative or apparently contradictory. What is said briefly to characterize the tradition may only be true of one aspect of it. To really understand it we must examine its teaching as a whole. The Hindu tradition contains a multidimensional approach which includes different teachings for various temperaments and different levels of seekers. There are many different teachers, names and form of the Divine, and yogic paths that open can choose from. Hence we must not jump to conclusions. The tradition is like the proverbial elephant, and we are the blind men who identify the whole animal with the one part their ands can touch. What may appear to be contradictory teachings are different parts of the same profound system of knowledge.

The Hindu tradition has often been criticized as being too formless, impersonal and otherworldly, seeing the world as illusion or Māyā and the Absolute as the real truth. On the other hand, it has also been criticized for recognizing every conceivable form and personal expression of the Divine – which is a criticism of the opposite nature. Hinduism not only has the idea of the formless immutable Brāhmin, but also the image of baby Krişņa, the erotic forms of the Goddess, Hanumān with the form of a monkey and Gaņeśa with an elephant face. Hinduism is not only the most ascetic or otherworldly of religions with its yogīs and forest renunciants, it is also the most life-affirming, filled with stories of love, marriage and family life, like the stories of Rāma and Krişņa. There is no contradiction between these two sides, for Hinduism emphasizes transcending life through understanding it, not merely through denying or suppressing it.

The Meaning of the Term "Tantra"

In the most, basic sense the Sanskrit term Tantra means merely nothing more than a "book". Any number of books on any number of subjects can be called Tantras. More specifically Tantra means a practical book – one that contains information and techniques – though it may contain philosophy as well. Tantra primarily means a compendium of various sorts of spiritual and occult knowledge, particularly those dating from medieval times in India. The term Tantra first appears about two thousand years ago and becomes prominent in teachings over the last 1500 years. There are not only Hindu Tantras but also Jain and Buddhist Tantras. There are not only Hindu Tantras but also Jain and Buddhist Tantras There are not only Tantric teachings for liberation but for the ordinary goals of life. There are not only spiritual Tantras but those for almost any field of human knowledge. Yet Tanric texts do have certain general characteristics.

Tantra and Hindu Tradition

In the Hindu tradition, teachings are of three orders:

1. Vedic
2. Purāņic
3. Tāntric

This division is largely one of time. The oldest level is the Vedic, then the Purāņic, with the Tantric being the more recent formulation of the teaching.

The Vedas derive from the ancient Sarasvatī river culture that flourished in North India between the Yamuna and Indus rivers before 1900 BC. This civilization is more commonly known as the "Indus Valley Culture" or "Mohenjodaro and Harappa," after its first two large cities discovered. It is now known to have been centered on the Sarasvatī river of Vedic fame, and is being more appropriately renamed the "Sarasvatī Culture."

The Purāņas reflect a shift that occurred when the center of Indian civilization moved to the Ganges – Yamuna plain after the Sarasvatī river went dry (around 1900 BC). The Tantras derived from the Purāņic teachings largely in medieval times, and are based on

Purāṇic myths and deities. While all these layers of the teaching have much in common, there is a shift in language and forms, as is natural in the course of time.

Yet we should note that Vedanta – which deals with the unity of the individual Self with the supreme Godhead – has persisted together with both Purāṇic and Tantric approaches and represents the essences of the Vedas as well. It is the constant element in the tradition.

Characteristics of Tantric Texts

Traditional Tantric texts are said to relate to the five following topics:

1. Creation of the universe
2. Destruction of the universe
3. Worship of the Divine in various forms
4. Attainment of the goals of life and spiritual powers
5. Ways of meditation to realize the ultimate truth

Tantras contain teachings dealing with the whole spectrum of human concerns; for the stages of life from youth to old age, for the different classes of society rituals for public welfare including acts of charity, rules for temple worship, sacraments of various kinds and most importantly, Yoga practices. Tantras are manuals for the entire community. A typical text in this regard is the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*. The Tantras are broad texts and not specialized in any particular direction. If we examine the bulk of Hindu Tantric lore, we see that it possesses the following characteristics: [7]

1. Tantra emphasizes techniques or energetic approaches, including ritual, mantra and visualization, though these are generally employed as a means to take us ultimately beyond techniques, rather than as an end in themselves.
2. Tantra has a universal approach that uses all available methods and rejects nothing. It includes methods that may be rejected in other teachings as "unspiritual."
3. Tantra gives a special place to the Goddess and her worship.

Lesser and smaller Tantric texts deal with specialized topics within these fields. Some are purely spiritual in nature and give secret keys to meditation and the cakras. These are probably the most interesting Tantric works. Other is mundane, dealing with science, astrology or similar topics. Yet others deal with occult and magical practices, including what could be called black magic – harming, paralyzing hypnotizing others, or placing them under the control of one's will. However, these lesser Tantras – which are the most sensational and have drawn the most attention – should not be thought of as representing the higher truth of Tantra or its ultimate goal.[8]

In the last but not the least, it may be considered the verse 31 of *Saundarya Laharī* of Ādi Śaṇkarācārya

चतुः षष्ठयातन्त्रैः सकल मतिसन्धाय भुवनं
स्थितस्ततत्सिछिदं प्रसवपरतन्त्रैः पशुपतिः।
पुनस्त्वत्रिर्बन्धा दखिल पुरूषायैंक घरना
स्वतंत्र ते तन्त्रं क्षितितलमवातीतरदिदम्।।

i.e. Oh Goddess, lord Śiva having created the sixty-four tantras to confuse the entire world to become dependant upon external powers, again by your word brought doan your Tantra, which gives self reliance and fulfills at once all the aim of life.

References

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Chapter 3

MOTHER-GODDESS (ŚAKTI) IN HINDU AND BUDDHIST TANTRAS

During 5th Century Mother-Goddess cult reached its maturity and in the idea that Śakti i.e., feminine is superior to masculine that the Mother-Goddess conception culminated. Tantras are a step forward. No doubt, similar ideas are at the root of it. Here also the Great Goddess rules supreme. She is the ultimate source and unto her disappears everything. She is the creator preserver and destroyer i.e. all the three aspects of creation are combined in her.[1]

The Tantras and the tantric form of worship have been greatly criticized for many reasons. According to Chintaharan Chakravarty, [2] in the most popular sense the tantra, in the present days, "is to denote a class of literature dealing with mystical and magical worship of various deities." Not only this, rather some scholars take it to denote the mystical worship of female deities (Śakti) alone with which are associated various revolting and apparently depraved and immoral rites. [3] It would be arreneous to accept such a meaning. To know the exact meaning of the Tantra we will have to enquire into the contents of the Tantric literature. B.T. Bhattacharya observes that, "The Hindus will not call any work as Tantra which does not include the following subjects among many others, fro instance, the stories of the creation and the destruction of the world, the mystic charms, a description of the abode of gods and of holy place, the duties of men in the four stages of life and of the position of the Brāhmins, a description of the abode of ghosts and other nocturnal beings of the mystic figures, the origin of magicians and celestial trees, of the position of the stars and discourses on old stories, meaning of technical terms, description of vows and observances, distinctions between purity and impurity, enumeration of the characteristics of male and female, account of duties of the king the customs of the age and of the rules of law and of spiritual subjects.[4] The Tantras, therefore, cover almost all the aspects of philosophy. Thus to brand it to be associated with immoral acts is unjustified. It requires a sober study, without any prejudice.

Sri K. Guru Dutt, regarding the meaning of Tantra, observes that, "The word Tantra is derived from the root *tan* – meaning to draw out, to spread. The significance is clearly brought out in words like tanu: what is spun out like a thread, a strand; and *tanu*: the body, in which the spirit has spread out or revealed itself. In hindu religious usage, Tantra stands for ritual in general, whether of the external variety or dealing with methods of introspection. Ritual has been called the art of religion, and most historical religions have been associated with some form or other of ritual, although the relative importance attached to it has varied greatly. The cloth of religion has been made up of the strands of Tantra, whatever may be the philosophical design into which the strands have been woven. To vary the image, ritualism has been, as it were, the body-*tanu* in which the spirit of religion has most commonly manifeated. As ordinarily there is no smoke without fire, it would be in order to say that there is no ritual without religion, and whatever there is ritual, there is Tantra.[5]

Tantricism, in India, therefore, has a hoary antiquity. It has been traced back to prehistoric times.[6] It is notices in Devī Śākta (Ṛgveda) by some scholars. [7] Even the *Brāhmaṇas* are taken as the *Tantras* of the *Veda* [8] though the real form of it was yet to take final shape in the Gupta and the post-Gutpa periods. Tantric form of worship was in vogue when Srimad Bhāgvat was written, since the gopis of the Braj worshipped Yogamaya (Goddess Śakti) for obtaining Sri Kṛiṣṇa as their husband, and references to tantricism can be found in the Mārkanḍeya, *Linga* and many other *Purāṇas*.[9]

In the opinion of a few scholars, the *Tantric* religion came from China whereas others say that it was taken from the Mahāyāna Buddhism. On the contrary, some say that the Mahāyāna Buddhism adopted the doctrine of the Indian ***Tantras*** and Arthur Avalon agrees that Tantras are not the off-shoots of the Buddhist Mahāyāna cult. According to L. Valle Poussion, 'Buddhist Tantrism is practically Buddhist Hinduism, or Śaivism in Buddhist garb. [10] Hence, essentially Hindu and Buddhist Tantras are similar in nature both Buddhist and Hindu Tantras hold that ultimate non-dual reality possesses two aspects: negative (nivṛtti) and positive (*pravṛtti)* – static and the dynamic. In Hinduism it is expressed in the conceptions of Śiva and Śakti whereas in Buddhism by *Prajṅā* and *Upāya* (or Śūnyata and Karuṇā).[11]

Motherhood of God is emphasized by the Tantras, which may 'appear to the sacrilegious, because we have been taught to look upon God as male being', but 'Tantras have preferred to represent Brahmā, as the Eternal Mother of Universe.[12] Supreme Deity, therefore, is held by the Tantras as the Eternal Mother of the Universe.[13] Similar to the philosophy of Tantra is the philosophy of Śaṅkhya. Both accept Pṛakrti, the creative energy of God to be the First cause from which everything has proceeded, the only difference lies in the fact that the Śaṅkhya takes it only to be the first creative energy whereas in Tantric system Pṛakrti is more popularly the name of the Goddess.[14]

The Hindu Tantra believes that after casting off the cover of Māyā, the great Śakti or Prakṛti divided herself into two viz Śiva and Śakti and from their union Brahmā was the first issue, who then created from his own energy a maiden (Great Vidyā or Savitri) and married her for creation. In this way Viṣṇu and Sadāśiva were created and given their Śaktis; hence Pṛakrti or Mahā-Śakti as the Tantras designate Her, is the creative power of the Almighty.

Tantras thus glorify Śakti. In the Purāṇas (especially Mārkanḍeya Purāṇa – Devī Mahātmya Section) we come across the conception of Śakti and legends connected to it but philosophical explanation is found only in the Tantric literature. The Supreme position of Devī (Śakti of Śiva) given in the Purāṇas, is further elucidated in this literature. Arthur Avalon observes that, "Power or Śakti is the root of all existence. It is from Śakti that Universes are evolved; it is by Śakti that they are sustained, and it is into Śakti that they are finally resolved. It is the same as Parābrāhman, is Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Chit) and Bliss (Ānanda). Śakti is denoted exactly these three aspects in the one without a second. Chit is the power, and the two other aspects go along with it, for without consciousness there would be neither existence nor happiness. Śakti then, is essentially absolute Satchitānanda, [15] and 'within, so to say, the womb of Śakti, is Māyā or Pṛakrti, the matrix of the universe which during cosmic inaction or Mahāpralaya is potential and latent, even as fire is latent within wood. Māyā or Pṛakrti is not a non-reality nor a state of equilibrium of certain thins; nor is it a something-nothing, some thing little (yatkinchit) an idea (bhāva).[16] The Śāktamālā Candrikā goes to declare that Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Vāsava all are Śaktis, which is also at the root of many other Devas, hence it is th greatest of all.[17]

The Buddhist Tantra is the development of the Yogācāṛa and was inspired by the Śunyavāda of the Mādhyamikas. Varayana, is therefore, an advancement of the Yogācāra thought. Vajrayāna literally means the adamantine path or vehicle but its technical meaning is 'Śūnya vehicle' where Sunya is in a special sense to represent Vajra. It is said: 'Śūnyata is designated as Vajra because it is firm and sound, and cannot be changed, cannot be pierced, cannot be burnt and cannot be destroyed.[18] Vajrayāna introduced a new element in the element of Mahāsukha (Eternal Bliss) to their conception of liberation.[19] For the first time the worship of Prajṅā or Śakti in Buddhism was introduced and a host of other things including a large number of gods and goddesses, their Sādhanās for the purpose of visualization, Mantras, Tantras, Yantras, Mudrās, Manḍalas, mystic realization and psychic exercises of the most subtle character. It included in its purview all varieties of attractive tenets, notorious, dogmas, theories, rites and practices, and incorporated all that was best in Buddhism and probably in Hinduism also and owing to this circumstance Vajrayāna attained great fame and popularity. Here the 'gods have no real existence, the images have no real existence, and therefore, we may be positive in saying that a true Vajrayanist never worshipped any image of god.' It is Śūnya which takes shapes of god and goddess in Vajrayāna. It is Heruka, when a male; and Nairatma, when a Goddess. [20]

Vajrayāna regards Ādi Buddha as the highest deity and in the *Yāb-yum* form he is shown in embrance with his Śakti (known as *Prajnāpāramitā*). In Vajrayāna Śūnyata and Karuṇā are given importance and in the Tantric Buddhism Śūnyata is termed Prajṅā and Karuṇā Upāya. Prajṅā Stands for Śūnyata because it represents perfect knowledge whreas Karuṇā acts in mind like a dynamic force. Prajṅā is passive by nature, the religious inspiration is derived from the active emotion of compassion, which serves like the means or the expedience (Upāya) for the realization of the highest goal.[21] The whole conception of Vajrayāna lies in interpreting the male and female relationship. The physical pleasure has been given sublimity with the metaphysical touch. Prajñā is even is even described as female organ and Upāya as the male organ[22] (a clear–cut similarity with the Linga and Yoni conception of Hindus).

We have, therefore, seen that both Hindu and Buddhist Tantras are similar in their conception and the same idea in put forward by them in different words.

Tantrism is generally associated with Chakrapujā and Pancatatva. Many interpretations are prevalent among people and this has made people suspicious about this system. But an analysis of these two elements would make it clear that they have enough of justification for themselves. To trace their origin is, of course very difficult. In the Chakra Pujā equal number of men and women belonging to different caste or castes and may be near relatives – husband, wife, mother, sister, brother meet in secret, usually in night and sit in circle. The Goddess may be represented by an image or Yantra. Then with the repetition of mantras, rituals is performed in which partaking of five tattavas (elements) is done, viz., wine (Madya), meat (Māṇsa), fish (Matsya), parched grain (Mudrā) [23] and sexual intercourse (Maithuna) [24]. The Yantra used in this worship has also a symbolic significance. It is an instrument designed 'to curb the psychic forces by concentrating them on a pattern. [25] Regarding Śrī-Yantra, Zimmer suggests, that among the nine triangles five are pointing downwards symbolizing Yoni and rest upward symbolizing Lingam (upward triangles are called Vāhinī and downwards ones Śakti), thus the Vāhinī triangles denote that male essence of the god ad the Śakti – triangles the female essence of his consort. [26] Barth observes: "The use of animal food and spirituous liquor, indulged into excess, is the rule in these strange ceremonies, in which Śakti is worshipped in the person of a naked woman, and the proceedings terminate with the carnal copulation of the initiated, each couple – representing Bhairava and Bhairavi (Śiva and Devī) and becoming thus for the moment identified with them. This is the Śrīcakra 'the holy Circle or the *Purāṇbhiṣekha*, complete conscription, the essential act, or rather fore-taste of salvation, the highest rite of this delirious mysticism. [27] It is needless to go into the detains of the mystic rituals.

Let us now come to the large number of goddesses belonging to Hindusim and Buddhism both, and their Tantric conception. The forms of Śakti have been classified on the Mahāvidyās or Vidyās and the Nityas.[28] These are Kālī, Kamakhyā, Vāsalī, Nila or Nilesarasvari or Tārā, Bherunda, Mahādurgā, Tvarita, Chhinnamasta, Vāgvādinī, Annapurṇā, Pratyengira Bālā, Mātaṇgī, Sailavasini, Ṣoḍaṣī, Bhūbneśvarī Bhairava, Dhūmavatī, Vagalā, Kamalā, Mahiṣāmardinī, Dhanada, Gaurī Tripurā, Tripurā, Mahāmāyā, Sulinī, Cāmūṇḍā, Kātyāyanī.[29] The deities like Kālī, Tārā, Durgā are very popular in Eastern India.[30] Besides Vaglāmukhi or Pīta, *Ucchistacanḍālini*, Karṇapiśācī, Śārikā of Kashmir, Kubjika of Nepal, Indrāksī and Rankini are also some of the deities, worth mentioning though we have very little information about them. The Vajrayānī goddessess [31] are: *Vajravilāsinī*, Vajra-Khecārī, Vajrāsani, Vajra rasanī, Varja tvasinī, *Vajrasparśinī*, Vajra Cetani, Vajra Vivāsinī, Vajra Vikāsiṇī, Kurkukullā Canḍālī (also known as Dombi Yoginī, Sahaja – Sundarī, Nairātma or Nairamanī) Ekajaṭā, Jāngulī, Parṇa Śavarī, Marīci, Ṣoḍalaksmī, Uṣṇiśavijaya, Chhinnamasta (it is included among both Hindu and Buddhist deities) and Tārā in detail here as because we have a number of good works[32] dealing with them. However, we shall take up here some of the important and interesting ones.

The morning goddess of the Vedic pantheon, Uṣās, in held to have found place in the Vajrayāna pantheon in the form of Mārīci. She is the goddess of Dawn in Tibet and has features like sun, though her chariot is drawn by seven pigs (and not horses). Her charioteer is just like Aruṇa (of Sun) a goddess without legs or Rahu, only a head without a body. Her worship is done independently and she is never shown in *Yāb-yum* with her consort Vairocana. In China she is called 'Queen of the Heaven' and Mother of the Dipper in Tibet, Goddess of Dawn in Japan. As Getty observes: 'Mārīci is evidently the goddess of Aurora of the Aryans. [33] To us it appears that it was not Uṣās who inspired the conception of Mārīci but sun himself. In the process of attaching highest importance to females and conceiving Gods also as femine the Sun was also grabed as Mārīci by the Vajrayanists. Her independent image is also in favour of such a contention. Ordinarily Mārīci is depicted with one face and two arms, but when she holds the bough of an Aśoka[34] tree in the left hand. She is called Aśoka. Kanta when she carries the needle and the string in her two hands, she is called Aray-Mārīci.[35] There are so many types of the goddess. She is depicted with a number of arms (varying) in her different forms, Almost all the images of this goddess discovered so far beling to the *Aṣṭabhujāpita* variety. The Indian Museum piece[36] (Pala period) depicts the goddess three faced and eight armed, standing in alidha attitude with her right leg somewhat bent and the left one thrown behind quite straight, over a double petalled lotus. The Lucknow Museum (From Sarnath,[37] piece is also three faced and has eight arms like the Indian Museum piece. She is an emanation from Vairocana.

Chinnamasta is another interesting figure conceived both by Hindus and Buddhists. She is among one of the Hindu's ten Mahāvidyās. According to Dhyāna the goddess Chinnamasta may be imagined to have a very awe- inspiring external appearance. She holds her own severed head in her left hand and from her served neck issued forth stream of blood falling into the mouth of the severed head. She is made and the fierce appearance with legs arranged in Pratyalidha attitude. She wears a garland of heads. [38] The Buddhist description is also the same with little variation. It is very difficult to explain this deity. This may be symbolic of putting an end of one's own ego. Ekjaṭā, Jāngulī and Parṇaśavarī all appear to be folk goddesses.

Among the Tantric goddesses two appear to have commanded wide popularity and are even to the present day worshipped inside and outside India – Kālī of the Hindu and Tārā of the Buddhists. We, therefore, propose to discuss them in short here. From the study of the literature and also from the iconographical representation a number of forms of Tārā come to our knowledge. In the Tibetan paintings we get some thirty specific forms, which is something extraordinary. Waddell observes: 'The genesis of the name 'Tārā' for this great Buddhist Matri, one of whose titles is 'Mother of Buddha', it seems to me probably suggested by the Hindu myth of Buddha or that planet Mercury, whose mother was Tārā; and, either by willful or accidental confusion, the idea got transferred to Buddha, who also not long after-wards received a place in the Hindu Pantheon. And her relatively milder nature better adapted her as a female energy, or Śakti to the Buddhas and Boddhisattvas, than her fierce counterpart in the Hindu Tantrism- the dread Durgā – who is given a much lower positioning Indian Buddhism. In the Mūla Tantra the world Tārā is used synonymously with 'wife' or 'queen' like Devī amongst the Hindu. [39] Through the cult of Tārā had definitely an obscure origin, yet it can be said that the conception of her cult has little of borrowing from Hinduism. The introduction of her cult into Buddhism almost began to ting Indian Buddhism.[40] Yuan Chwang, in the first half of the seventh Century A.D. incidentally referrers to her image being worshipped at a few Buddhist shrines in India, [41] but her worship must soon thereafter have developed rapidly, for her inscribed images, dating from the eight to the twelfth centuries A.D. are numerous at old Buddhist sites throughout India including Magadha – the birth-place of Buddhism.[42]

Tārā has some similarity with the Hindu Goddess Laksmī, because both are water-born.[43] Tārā appears to be most appropriate a mother goddess full of compassion for the suffering humanity. She is unlike Hindu Mother-Goddess born to exterminate evil forces. And the story of her birth is true representation of her nature as she is born from the tear shed by Avalokiteśvara.[44] The tear from the left eye formed a lake, on which like a lighting flash appeared floating on a lotus flower the goddess Tārā whom Avalokita then commissioned to soothe human suffering. Waddell remarks that "Tārā's appearance is quite Indian, and entirely different from that of the female Avalokita, or 'Kwanyin' of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists – the indigenous Chinese 'Queen of Heaven."

Tārā has different forms – pacific and ferocious both, red, yellow and blue coloured are ferocious whereas white and green ones are pacific forms. Mostly these Tārās are represented always seated, but when accompanying Avaloliteśvara or any other important god she is represented standing. [45]

Tārā, therefore, appears to be a great Buddhist goddess [46] who commanded veneration in India and outside also. She was more popular in Tibet, though in the Pala Sena period we have a number of her representations from Eastern India.

Hindu Tantric deity Kālī is more mysterious in conception. She too has a number of forms, but mostly ferocious. The birth of Tārā was to soothe suffering humanity, whereas Kālī was born to destroy evil. Basically their characters differ; But Kālī too has many forms e.g. Siddha Kālī, Guhya Kālī, Bhadra Kālī, Śamaśāna Kālī, Rāksa-Kālī or Mahā Kālī and Danksiṇā Kālīka. Daksiṇā Kalika is the most popular form, which is quite fearful in appearance having four hands gruesome face, black color, garland of human heads, corpses constitute her ear ornaments, girdle of human hands, having in he hands freshly severed head, sword, and blood-smeared body and blood also tricking through the corners of her mouth. She is naked (Digambarī), teeth protruding, breads large and high, seated on the bosom of Mahādeva lying as dead, and surrounded on all sides by howling and fearful she-jackals. In her nature she is therefore opposite to Tārā. She is born from the forehead of Devī who became black with anger as demons (Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa) came to attach her. [47] Tārā is born from compassion whereas Kālī is born from anger.

Kālī [48] is worshipped in Bengal on the day of diwali with pomp and grandeur, B.C., Majumdar has pointed out that Vākpatirāja (8th Century) in his Gauḍavāho refers to Kālī women and the Śabaras as the worshippers of Kālī. [49] When and how the cult of Kālī became popular in Bengal in an interesting problem. Many scholars have advocated her non-Aryan origin, which may not be improbability though S.N. Bose on the other hand takes Śiva-Kālī cult of purely Aryan origin, because no trace of Tantric rites is found among the wild savages of India. [50] He explains the symbolic meaning of her iconographical features; 'her darkness can be symbol of Infinite, sky is normally dark, Lord Kriṣṇa was also black: her disheveled hair a symbolic clouds floating in the sky. Her necklace of skull, griddle of palms, Ghost around may indicate the terrible aspect of death-destruction and dissolution, occurring every moment around us. Her right hand raised assuring protection, left bestows blessings: the Mahākāla under feet is not Śiva but the image of time: Time has no existence without God. Time and space are annihilated in Brahmā and this is that has been expressed in the Adya Kālī Stoṭra of the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra. [51] R.P. Chanda remarks that in the Tantric image of Kālī is pictured forth Indian or rather the Bengali conception of the all-destroying Time. [52]

The representation of the Buddhist goddess Aparājitā is quite interesting. She has been shown as trampling upon Gaṇeśa. [53] (the epithet *Gaṇapatisama Krānta* being peculiar to her). It may point out the familiar them of religious Clashes, but other detail of the representation is quite unintelligible. The goddess is shown attended by gods like Brahmā, Indra and others. One may see in this the humiliation of all these gods. Still is surprising as to why only Gaṇeśa is trampled upon and not the other gods, though Brahmā is a member of the Hindu Triad. However, it may be said that the conception of Aparājita was formed in the locality predominated by the Gangapatyas, which necessitated defeat of the Lord of Ganapatys-Gaṇeśa. It is interesting to note that this goddess is not assigned to any Dhyānī Buddha, a and no iconographical feature make her emanating from any of the five Dhyānī Buddha.

Jāngulī is widely worshipped amongst the Buddhists as a goddess who cures Snake-bites and prevents, it and according to Sangiti in the Sādhanamālā she is as old as Buddha himself. The secret of Jāngulī and the mantras for her worship are said to have been imported to Ānanda by Lord Buddhas.[54] Jāngulī appears to have been originally a folk-goddess who war taken into the fold of Buddhist pantheon like Yaksas and Yaksīs of the earlier period.

Nairatma is another powerful goddess of this pantheon. It is similar to the form of Vajravarāhī with Kartri and Kapilā and when it lies on the breast it is Vajravarāhī and when it lies on the back it is Nairatma.[55] She has a terrible appearance, canine teeth, garland of head and three eyes rolling in anger. She stands on a corpse like Hindu goddess Kālī.

Uṣṇiṣa Vijaya is the mot popular deity of the pantheon in Nepal where in every temple her image is installed. However, her mot artistic specimen belongs to the Indian Museum, Calcutta. [56]

In the Tantras we find sixty four Yoginīs mentioned. The Āgamic texts enumerate some sixty four Yoginīs. [57] We get their representations from Bheraghat near Jabalpur. At Khajuraho also there is a temple called Sixty four Yoginī temple belonging to the pre Candella period.

Tantricism which almost began to be popular in about 6th Century A.D., slowly and slowly became popular. Most of the popular goddesses of Hinduism or Buddhism came to be associated with Tantric form of worship J.N. Banerjea observes that, 'In the Mediaeval period Tantricism associated with Brāhmanical Hinduism as well as of Buddhism attained full development in India, the cult being especially predominant in Eastern India. Śakti worship was also popular among many Hindus of extreme South West of India, and tradition says that Śaṇkarācārya the greatest exponent of Advaitavāda, was at heart in worshipper of the goddess. [58]

Tantricism has nothing new but forceful exposition of conception of supreme Śakti in the root of everything and a form of worship with certain specific rituals, moral conception and secrecy. [59] In true perspective Tantric form of worship is motivated by purely magical bearing. It stresses on Sādhanā. It is by virtue of this direct knowledge of the Brāhmin in the form of Śiva and Śakti that Tantric Sādhakas ever conquer the world. Strengthened by it, the Sādhaka does not design even to cast a look at other Sastras. [60]

While keeping the view of the cult of the Mother-Goddess we cannot ignore, folk goddesses their history and nature. Many of the folk elements must have been assimilated in growing orthodox cults cut many could retain their individuality, though we come across various attempts in the vast extent of religious literature towards the identification of the folk elements with that of the orthodox cult. And in such an attempt the fold goddess have been identified with the Great Mother-Goddess – Śaktidevī. Throughout India there are thousands on local goddesses, whose study here is not pratively possible. We will, therefore, confine ourselves to the study of few important fold goddesses the Hindu and the Buddhist, who still occupy an important place in the religious belief of the people e.g. Hārīti, Manasā, Saṣṭhi, Jyeṣṭha.

Hārīti

Hārīti [61] is essentially a Buddhist fold goddess. The characteristic iconographical feature of this goddess is the babe in her lap, which makes her a mother goddess. She might have something to do with Child welfare. We have an interesting account given in the Mahābhārata.[62] Jarāsandha was the king of Magadha ruling at Rajagrha and was one of the enemies of Śrīkriṣṇa. Jarāsandha was originally born in two-halves and it was due to Ogress Jarā that two discarded halves were brought back to life on being joined together. Hence the name of Jarāsandha, literally meaning 'United by Jarā'. Jarā had the power to assume many shapes and was a Rāksāsī (Kāmarupinī). She was worshipped not only in the royal house hold but also venerated by the people in general making her gṛha devī. If she was painted on the walls of the house in youthful appearance surrounded by her children, the house-holder was to be blessed with plenty. Similar tradition (having affinity with Jarā) about an Ogress is preserved in the Vinayapiṭaka of the Śṛavastīvāda School, the Mahāvastu[63] and the Samyukta ratna Sūtra of the Chinese Sūtrapiṭaka.[64] According to this story a Yaksiṇī named Huannāsī meaning 'Joy' [65] was the tutelary deity of Magadha. On account of an unholy wish expressed by her in one of her previous births, she indulged in the practice of robbing the people of Rajagṛha of their children and feeding herself and her 500 sons on the. The local people gave her the name of Hārīti (literally 'one who steals'). Lord Buddha is said to have taught her a lesson for stealing by hiding her youngest son[66] and later on ordained that in all monasteries and in the house of all right-minded people, her figure and the figures of her children are to be carved or painted and eatables offered to them. Banerjea observes that, 'There is little doubt about the ideological affinity between Hārīti and Jarā and the popularity of the cult of the former both in and outside India is fully vouchsafed by literary and archaeological data.[67] And the two stories go to prove that some goddess was very popular in Magadha, particularly around Rajagṛha. It was, however, adopted by the Buddhist. The popularity of Buddhist depended to some extent on its tendency to accommodate folk sentiments.

In India she was widely worshipped. Her images along with her husband Pancikā[68] have been found. The evolution of Pancikā must have been taken from the Yaksa, who are essentially guardians of the treasures and the purse of gold in his hand prove that he got himself transformed from a 'jealous gaolar into a generous dispenser of riches.[69] Similar transformation we have noticed in the case of Hārīti who forms an Ogress became a matron.[70] Foucher further observes that originally she was nothing more than a terrible infantile epidemic who lived on children of men for her food but in religious art (which presupposes her conversion by Buddha), her sole function is to accord to the vows of the faithful a numerous progeny.[71] Hārīti has, therefore, both Hindu and Buddhist ancestry and was worshiped by both.

Getty informs us that the Hindu goddess Hārīti was worshipped in northern India by bereaved parents and in Nepal she was belived to prevent small-pox. [72] She is represented both in the form of Saint and Ogress in Japan, and is worshipped under the names of Koyasu Kwan-non as saint and Kishi-no-jin as Ogress.[73] Waddell thinks, on the basis of Sculptures of Hārīti with Kuvera that she is none other than a form fo Vasudharā, goddess fo Abundance, and consort of Kuvera, god of wealth. [74]

The above discussion has clearly shown that Hārīti with whatever origin she might be connected, is essentially a Mother-Goddess and a true Mother-Goddess looking to the prevention of disease, need of progeny and wealth. She appears to be an effective goddess for her cult was adopted by the Hindus as well as the Buddhists. The legends connected with her as preserved in the literature definitely connect her with Rajagṛha but she was given an important place in the Gandhara Art. To us it appears that it was because the artist found familiarity of the myth as it was similar with one connected with the western legends. In the Gandhara art we find a number of her representations which made Yuan-Chung to associate the very conversion of this goddess with Taxila.

The Chinese traveller refers to the Hārīti Stupa said to have been erected by Aśoka and which was located by Founcher at *Sare-Makhedheri* in Pesawar, and narrates how her worship migrated outside India to Eastern China (through Chinese Turkistan and Kashmir), Korea and Japan, though in transformed character. [75] This shows that the antiquity of the worship of this goddess can be traced back to the Mauryan period, which is very doubtful, whether Aśoka could be associated with the erection of Stupas over such cannibal goddess is itself a problem. However, we can safely believe that in Kuṣāṇa period her iconographical representation had started.

The usual representation of the Goddess shows her sitting on a full blown lotus with a babe in her lap and other children around her. B.K. Dutta discusses an image of Hārīti from Nalrora which is not in sitting posture but stand son a lotus, decorated with simple ornaments like a Santali maiden and though provided with a loin cloth, she has intentionally been shown round in nude which makes her an embodiment of profusion and wealth.[77] But in this the artist never forgot her cannibalistic affiliation. In iconography this aspect is shown either associating her figure with skull-cup or a fish or a pomegranate.[78] The Nalgora image has been associated with pomegranate.[79] N.K. Bhattasali on the other hand indentifies an image, in the Dacca Museum with Hārīti, which is seated on a lotus seat, with four arms (the upper right hand holds a fish and the upper left hand has a drinking bowl and with the two normal hands she holds a baby in her lap. [80]) Bhattasali observes that, The present image with two extra hands holding a fish as skull up appear to be a Mahāyāna redaction of the two two-armed goddess, reminiscent of the cannibal nature of the goddess. [81]

The cult of Hārīti, therefore, had wide prevalence and popularity. We learn from the accounts of the 7th Century Chinese traveler, how her cult was acclimatized in ancient Gandhara. This is also proved by the discovery of a number of representations [82] mostly belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period. Here Buddhist counterpart had a long history of her own both in India and outside India. In India she is sometimes depicted along with her children while at other time accompanied by her consort Kuvera, the Yaksaraja (Some times described as Pancikā, the general of the Yaksa-King) as well as her playing children.

Manasā

We have just discussed an ogress (Hārīti) who became a goddess with a benevolent character. Now let us discuss the cult of Manasā who was originally a serpent. Her worship is very popular in Bengal, which takes place on the fifth lunar day of Sravana (Nāga-panchami). Manasā is identified with the sister of Vāsuki (Jarātkaru) who was married to a Brāhmin sage named Jarātkaru and to whom Asitikā was born ultimately saved the entire race of the Nāgas from its mass destruction by Janmejaya.[83] No doubt Nāga-Pujā has a remote origin but the origin and development of a particular cult is shrouded in obscurity. The only fact which we can say with certainty is its popularity in Bengal. It appears that her cult had a

Bengal origin or it was transplanted into Bengal by some migrating clan. However, in the present state of knowledge it is difficult to say anything with certainty.

Prof. Kshitimohaṇa Sena advocates its southern origin.[84] According to Prof. Sena the southern snake goddess Manchammā or Mother Manchā, who is still worshipped among the Telugu and Canarese speaking people of southern India, obtained in Bengal the Semi-Sanskritised name of Manasā. N.K. Bhattasali agrees and futehr informs that the name does not occur in the earlier grammars and lexicographies and the mediaeval grammarians and lexicographers and difficulty in explaining this ungrammatical name. [85] It is no wonder that the cult of Manasā came to Bengal with many families coming from south India and which almost dominated the history of Bengal [86] and Bihar for a considerable long period – the Senas of Bengal and Karnats of Mithilā may be mentioned in this connection. The iconographical representation[87] of Manasā is also very late, which goes to support this contention.

N K Bhattasali[88] tries to show that Manasā, who was imported to Bengal from South India quickly out did Jāngulī a Buddhist snake goddess (of the Mahāyāna school) in popularity. Manasā, no doubt, had similar characteristics, as she was the healer of the effects of poison.[89] In the Dhyāna[90] quoted by Mr Bhattasali, Manasā is lotus born and also daughter of Śaṇkara with a pleasant face and serpent hoods. It is quite likely that with the decline of Buddhism in India, Manasā having similar characteristics replaced Jāngulī and soon acquired popularity. And there remains little doubt about a late import of the cult of the Goddess Manasā.

However, it is interesting to note the popular worship of the goddess does not takes place in her anthropomorphic form, rather on the occasion of *Nāgapanchamī* 'a milky hedge plant is planted on a raised mound of earth in the courtyard of the house an din the form of this plant the goddess Manasā is worshipped. [91] In the popular legend she is said to have told that she lived in the cactus tree (*Euphorbium pentandra*).[92] This form of worship shows on the other hand an ancient origin. It is, therefore, more convincing to hold that snake worship in the above mentioned form was prevalent in Bengal as also in other parts of India from a very long time and it was only on the later period that such worship was associated with Goddess Manasā. [93] A large number of stone image of Manasā of the 10th – 12th Century, that have been found throughout Bengal, also supports the established character of her cult during this period. Her images can also be noticed represented outside Bengal and in Orissa, there is a representation of Nagamata with a grownup lad on her lap.[94] Marshal points out to an interesting sculpture of black basalt from Birhum district of Bengal, where the goddess has been shown with her son on her lap and two serpents on both the sides, one may be representing sage Jarātkaru in serpent guise and other her brother Vasuki. Here identification of Jarātkaru in the guise of serpent may be doubled. Manasā, therefore, undoubtedly influenced the religious belief of the common fold in Bengal. In his book 'The Ritual Art of the Brates of Bengal' Sudhansu Kumar Ray, shows how in terracotta representation and in Alpanā this goddess occupied a prominent place in Bengal.[95]

Ṣaṣṭhī

Ṣaṣṭhī is another prominent folk goddess of Eastern Indian and her cult too has a strong hold in Bengal. She is essentially, a mother goddess and has definitely folk-origin. She is the goddess of married women who assist at child birth. She is therefore, the guardian of young children. She is naturally represented as a golden-complexioned woman with a child in her arms, and her vāhana is a cat. [96] In a year six times festivals in her honor are held, in addition to which women who have lost all their children by death worship her monthly.[97] She, therefore, appears to be presiding over the welfare of newly born children and her ordinary representative is said to be a rough stone as big as man's head, smeared with red paint, and set at the foot of the sacred Vaṭa tree.[98] Such a form of worship decidedly shows its remote origin like Manasā. Whether this cult too had a foreign origin is a matter of equity, on which nothing can be said with certainty. Her cult is similar to that of Manasā in Bengal. Asutosh Bhattacharya observes that like Manasā and Mangal Caṇḍī, Ṣaṣṭhī is a local popular deity. Ṣaṣṭhī has found a niche in one or two late day Sanskrit Purāṇas exactly in the manner in which Manasā and Mangal Caṇḍī have secured a place in the later Purāṇas. [99] The name Ṣaṣṭhī cannot be found in the ancient Sanskrit Purāṇa or literature, except the later Purāṇa like Devī Bhāgavata and Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa wherein her name is referred. [100]

Ṣaṣṭhī, therefore, though came later into Aryan fold, her worship had a wider prevalence than goddess Manasā. She more likely became popular like Hārīti. Both may be identical.[101] Ṣaṣṭhī, is worshipped on the sixth day [102] of the birth of a child and that also not in anthropomorphic form but in a diagram, prepared with the help of cow dung and vermillion, though her anthropomorphic representation is also not unknown. And her images were discovered from different regions of India. From Rajoana one figure of Ṣaṣṭhī was discovered with a lingam and a long slab of the Navagraha or Nine planets. [103] A finely preserved figure of Ṣaṣṭhī or Bhavānī, called simply Devī with a dhild in her lap was discovered from a place South of Lakhisarai Railway Station. Cunningham found Ṣaṣṭhī image and a pedestal dated in Samvat 1193 or A.D. 1136 from Kanauji. At Ajayagarh a four armed goddess sitting with a child in her lap has been found associated with five pigs one above another on her right side and eight pigs in pairs above one another on her left hand which shows that this is the figure of Ṣaṣṭhī the goddess of fecundity. R.C. Majumdar discusses a unique image of Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī having four hands holding a baby and also a leafy branch with a cat looking upward. The cat appearing in this figure identifies her with Ṣaṣṭhī.[104]

The vāhana of this goddess is cat which deserves some enquiry. The cat is a very meek animal, but at times ferocious too. In fold tales she is called '*Bilai Mausi*'(O mother's sister) almost a second mother which shows how she is loved by the people. We do not know why, how and when such notions came to be established. Mouse is the vahana of Gaṇeśa, cat is an enemy of mouse. Hence if Ṣaṣṭhī and Gaṇeśa are opposite to each other we cannot say. We have no doubt tradition of cat goddess inside and outside India. In Egypt she is Maau (or Atet) and in India Bidali. Swami Sankaranada, finds in cat a solar significance and thinks the mother of Aditi of the Vedas, the earth goddess of the Indus Valley and the mother Kālī and Ṣaṣṭḥī of the Modern times are the same and one deity. [104] Such a conclusion is quit bold and it lacks positive evidence.

There is no doubt that Ṣaṣṭḥī was a popular Cult of India and as early as 7th Century A.D., her representation and connection with Child's birth is referred to by Bāṇabhaṭṭa. In Kādambarī[105] the maternity house of Vilāsavatī is said to be decorated with Swastika designs and figures of Ṣaṣṭḥī.

Mr. Bhattacharya [106] informs us about the 12 forms of Ṣaṣṭḥī worshipped during 12 months of the year: (1) Vaiśākha – Dulha Ṣaṣṭḥī; (2) Jyeṣṭhā – Aranya (Jungala) Ṣaṣṭḥī (3) Āṣadḥa – Koḍa Ṣaṣṭḥī (4) Śrāvaṇa – Lotan Ṣaṣṭḥī (5) Bhādra – Manthan Ṣaṣṭḥī (6) Āśvin – Durgā Ṣaṣṭḥī (7) Kārtika – Goat Ṣaṣṭḥī (8) Agrahāṇya – Mūla Ṣaṣṭḥī (9) Pauṣa – Patai Ṣaṣṭḥī (10) Māgha – Śitalā Ṣaṣṭḥī (11) Phālgun – Aśoka Ṣaṣṭḥī (12) Caitra – Nil Ṣaṣṭḥī. He further informs us that in some places of Bengal there are places belived to be presided over by Goddess Ṣaṣṭḥī, which are known as Ṣaṣṭḥitalas and where mothers go to secure the well being of children.[107]

The Cult of Ṣaṣṭḥī though very popular remained confined to the female community due to her nature. According to the popular legend, it was only the low class poor people who used to perform the worship of this goddess but later on her worship was propagated among the wealth section of the society also and further it was introduced into royal families. It may be mentioned here that on the sixth day of the bright hald of Kārtika Chhaṭa festival is celebrated in Bihar and U.P. on this day people gather on the bank of some river or tank and eatables are offered to the setting sun as well as the rising sum. This festival is popularly called as the worship of Chhati Mai. On this day, therefore, Ṣaṣṭḥī s worshipped. But actually people offer eatables to sun-God. Hence some sort of connection appears between Ṣaṣṭḥī and the Sun-God.

Jyeṣṭḥā

Another a important folk goddess is Jyeṣṭḥā. She was the popular deity of south India, but her worship there, is now practically obsolete. The origin of the Cult of Jyeṣṭḥā appears to buried into remote past. However her worship is certainly as old s Baudhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra,[108] in which her worship has been elaborately described. She is described here as Jyeṣṭḥā, Kapilā patnī, Kumbhī, Jyāya, Hastimukha, Vighnaparṣāda, Nirṛiṭi having lions attached to her chariot and tigers following her.[109] These different names of the goddess are quite interesting. She is Kapilā patni because she was taken for his wife by Kapilā when she cme out of the ocean at the tiem of the churning of the ocean before Laksmī. She is Jyeṣṭḥā because she is elder to Laksmī. It is difficult to explain the word Jyaya. But the words Hastimukha, Vighnaparṣāda and Nirṛiṭi occurring for her are significant. She is an inauspicious goddess and an interesting story about her birth and life is told in the Linga Purāṇa.[110] According to it she was married to sage Dussaha, who soon found that she was loath to hear the praises of and prayers to the gods Viṣṇu and Śiva and was averse to encourage a good deed. Mārkanḍeya, however, advised him to take her to places where all sorts of evil and inauspicious things were being done (including shrines where non-vedic forms of worship were performed. [111] It is further said that when she was abandoned by sage Dussaha, she was advised by Viṣṇu to visit those people who were exclusive worshippers of him and who did not pay homage to Śiva thus Jyeṣṭhā became a Vaiṣṇava deity, though due to her evil character, she was dreaded by Viṣṇu even. Dr Banerjea observes: This popular myth evidently concocted with a deep sectarian bias unwillingly hints at the manner of introduction of such goddess cults among the orthodox sectaries. [112] She is therefore, undoubtedly a late adoption of Vaiṣṇavism and her malevolent character is established.

She is called Nirṛiṭi and we definitely know that Nirṛiṭi is a goddess of disease, destruction, and misfortune in the Ṛgveda.[113] which also shows her malevolent character. The other three appellation, Kumbhī, Hastimukha and Vighna parṣada give a different suggestion. In our opinion in some remote past Gaṇeśa and Jyeṣṭhā belonged to the same class [114] and must have been the chief deities of a particular tribe residing somewhere in central Deccan. The above three appellations carry the same meaning. Gaṇeśa is elephant headed and our Jyeṣṭhā too, Gaṇeśa is also called Vighnarāja and Jyeṣṭhā is called Vighnoparsada[115] i.e., in counsel of Vighna. One is the lord of obstacles and the other is his adviser. Kumbhī is a word derived from root Kumbhā and Kumbhā also means the upper portion of an elephant's head.[116] Not only this but in iconographic texts also as Gapinath Rao[117] shows from *Aṁsumadbhedāgama*, *Suprābhedāgama*, *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Purvakaraṇagama*, that she should be shown with two arms, nose, sagging lips, long and pendulous breasts and belly and Rao has also illustrated a few mediaeval relief of Jyeṣṭhā which correspond to a great extent with her textual descriptions, Gaṇeśa is also called lambodara (long bellied), Jyeṣṭhā too has a long belly. She is long nosed and with sagging lips which very much speak of her being Hastimukha. The above discussion may bring us to the conclusion that both these deities belonged to the same family who later on were adopted by the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites. It is interesting to note here that in the Matsya Purāṇa.[118] Jyeṣṭhā appears to be one of the numerous Mātrikās created by Śiva to drink the blood of Andhakāsura. We may find in these Hastimukha and Hastimukha deities some tribal affiliation and elephant head (as we find in the case of Gaṇeśa) may mark their totemic origin. [119]

She is associated with lions and tigers which definitely shows her connections with forest dwellers and proves her tribal origin (probably with the aboriginals). A Goddess whose chariot is driven by lions and is followed by tigers, is definitely the goddess having control over the wild beasts – Mother of Beasts in this connection. She is, therefore, a protector against wild beasts and must have been one popular with the forest dwellers. She is crow bannered is accompanied by her children and also Kālī's wife riding on a donkey. [120] And we have a number of iconographical representation of this goddess corresponding to the given, description in the texts of the medieval period and Rao has illustrated a few of her reliefs. [121]

Two things about the cult of Jyeṣṭhā is well-established – firstly, its popularity in the South and secondly, its late adoption in the Vaiṣṇava fold. For one of the Alavars (Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints) Tondaradipoddi by name 'complained in his songs about the foolishness of the common people.[122] Who worshipped such goddesses of lowly origin for happiness and prosperity; when they could easily obtain supreme bliss by praying to Lord Viṣṇu. [123] Such a remark show that the orthodox Vaiṣṇavism had to struggle hard in th south against the local gods and goddess. The story regarding its origin from the ocean, her original character [124] and a compromise when Viṣṇu allowed oblations to her by all the Vaiṣṇavas, shows that she was adopted late, perhaps because without making a compromise with her cult Vaiṣṇavism faced some difficulty in being accepted by the common folk.

A third thing pointed out by Dr Banerjea about this cult is quite fascinating. The learned scholar has tried to establish a link between this south Indian goddess Jyeṣṭhā and north Indian goddesses Hārīti and Śītalā.[125] According to him ground lost be her in her homeland was gained by her another name, Śītalās in Eastern and Western parts of India viz., Bengal, Orissa, Gujrat [126] etc. Śītalā contains a few notable characteristics of Jyeṣṭhā as having donkey as vahana sweeping broom and a pitcher as emblems, and adorned with a winnowing fan on her head. Banerjea thinks, therefore, that Jyeṣṭhā became Śītalā.[127] Such a transformation is not altogether improbable. But we do not have any specific proof except some iconographic similarity.

Let us now conclude our discussion of the folk goddesses. Besides these important cults a large number fo such sulcts existed all over India and to mention all of them is not practically possible and is also out side the scope of the subject at hand. We may, however, mention the cult of Magadheśvarī prevalent in the districts of Chittagong which probably ahd a remote origin in Magadha or south Bihar. [128]

We have noted one thing common in all these cults, originally they were having malevolent character which was subsequently changed to give them a benevolent character – prerequisite of a Mother Goddess.

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12. Bose, D.N., op. cit., p. 59.
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17. Ibid.:, p. 495.
18. Bhattacharya, B., The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p. XVII.
19. Ibid., p. XI, It is from Mahāsukha that Vajrayāna originated and Vajrayāna is the system rich in iconographical idea.
20. Ibid., p. 164 – The different āsanas have a different meaning e.g., Vajraparyanka – meditaion Archaparyanka or Lalitāsana – Serenity, Alidha – heroism, Pratyalidha – destruction, Loathsomeness. Dancing attitude in Ardhaparyanka wrath horror.
21. Das Gupta, S.B., op., cit., p. 101; *Yosit tavat bhaver prajna Upayati purushah smritah* (Hevajra Tantra).
22. Yoni – *Svabhavatah prajnā* Upayo bhava – Laksmaṇa (Sri guhya-Samaja-tantra).
23. Mudrā also means 'Mystic gestures.'
24. Maithuna (sexual intercourse as rendered) appears something extra-ordinary in this system and looks quite immoral act. Relaxation of sex-rules may not be the motto and something else (probably a philosophical discussion) might have been meant.
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29. Ibid., p. 86.
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31. For details see B. Bhattacharya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography.
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39. JRAS, 1984, p. 63, the cult of Tārā might be taken to have a foreign origin from Sadhanamala it appears that it came from Bhota or Tibet of Chakraverty, C., op. cit., p. 46.
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41. Beal, Si-Yu ki, II, p. 103-174.
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43. Ibid., p. 64-65; Tārā a great object of veneration in the Hindu Tantras, appears to have been a direct borrowal from Buddhism of Banerjea, J.N. DHI, p. 560, n.1.
44. M.C.P. Sri Vastava op. cit., p. 163.
45. Getty, A., The Gods in Northern Buddhism, p. 106.
46. Chakravarty, C., op. cit., p. 90.
47. Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa – Devī Mahātmya, Section VII, 5.
48. Chakravarty C., op. cit., 92; She is regarded as guardian deity against Cholera even in some villages in south India. Cf. Whitehead, H. The village gods of South India, Cal. 1916, p. 28.
49. Ibid., p. 46 also JRAS, 1906, pp. 70-71.
50. Bose, D.N., op. cit., p. 70-71.
51. Ibid., p. 92-93.
52. Indo Aryan Races., p. 138.
53. Bhattacharya, B.T., op. cit., p. 190; Sinha, B.P., Bhartiya Kala Ko Bihar Ki Dena, pp., 139-40.

54. Bhattacharya, B.T., op. cit., p. 80 pl. XXVIId, XXVIIIa.
55. Bhattacharya, B.T., op. cit., p. 90 pl. XXXa; Indian Museum no. 3941.
56. Ibid., p. 100.
57. Banerja, DHI, p. 465-66.
58. Ibid., p. 495.
59. M.C., P. Srivastava op. cit., p. 165.
60. Avalon, Arther, Principles of Tantra, p. 209.
61. D.H. Gordon holds that Hārīti was the important Mother Goddess of the Gandhara, with whom philosophy of Buddhism had to share its sanctuaries and its worship, no lesser one thatn the great Mother Goddess herself, patron of Puskalāvatī as Athene of Athena (Antiquity, XI, 1937, p. 71).
62. Mbh., II, 18, 1-6.
63. Senart (Ed) Mahavastu, Vol., p. 253. Chhotravastu Avadana. Here she is Kuṇāla by name and is associated with Vaisali. It is only in the Vinayapitaka and the Chinese Sūtra pitaka that we know about Hārīti.
64. Banerjea, J.N., DHI p. 381.
65. Ibid., p. 381.
66. Pingala or Pilengka.
67. Ibid., p. 381, Yun Chung places the place of conversion near Taxila (Wattes, On Yuan Chuang, Vol I, p,. 216) Yuan Chung calls her proctectress of and giver of children whereas fishing makes her giver of wealth too. Takakusu, A Record of Buddhist Religion in India, p. 37 – As referred to in N.K. Bhattasali's book 'Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Sculptures in Dacca Museum, p. 66.
68. Foucher observes: "In the man it has long been proposed to recognize Kuvera, the King of the spirits but the texts merely designate him as their 'general' by his nema Pancikā and is in virtue of this title that he is nearly always leaning upon a lance." Cf. the Beginnings of Buddhist Art., p. 141.
69. Ibid., p. 141.
70. Ibid., p. 141, Foucher calls her Buddhist Madonna.
71. Foucher, op. cit., p. 141, Foucher finds a similarity of their myth with that of one concerned with Lamin who was transformed into Licina.
72. Getty, A., the Gods of the Northern Buddhism, p. 75.
73. Ibid., p. 76
74. Ibid., p. 75 also "Evolution of the Buddhist cult, its gods, images and art – Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review, Jan 1912
75. IHQ, 1938 p. 101 ff. Some Folk Goddess of Ancient and Mediaeval India – J N Banerjea.
76. JISOA, X 1942 p. 207, The Goddess of Buddhist Pantheon.
77. JISOA, X op.cit., p. 208.
78. Gautama is believed to have cured her of cannibalism by giving her a diet of pomegranate, the red fruit being supposed to resemble human flesh' – Getty informs (The God in Northern Buddhism p. 75).
79. JISOA, X 1942, p. 208; Thus symbol is still used in Japan but never adopted in China (Getty, op., cit., p. 75).
80. Bhattasali, N.K., Iconography of the Buddhist and the Brāhmanical sculptures in Dacca Museum p. 63; pl. XXV opposite page 64.
81. Ibid 67 and also M.C.P. Srivastava op. cit., p. 169.
82. Agrawala, V.S. A Catalogue of the Brāhmanical image in Mathura Art. Pp. 88-91.
83. Vogel, J. P., Indian Serpent Lore, P. 278 In the Adiparva of the Mohabharata the serpent sacrifice is detailed. Mr N KBhattasali has discussed this Goddess in detail in his book. 'Iconography of the Buddhist and Brāhmanical sculptures in Decca Museum, pp. 212-227; plates LXXII-LXXXIII.
84. Pravāsī, 1929, B.S. p. 384-95.
85. Bhattasali, N.K op. cit., p 221.

86. Bhattasali observes : 'They very likely the worship of snake goddess Mancha and their rise probably gave an impetus to her popurality, of Ibid., p. 224
87. There is an uncertainly about the so called Mathura image of Māṇasa Devī, which is inscribed in the inscription Yaksī Layava –Asiar 19922-23, p. 165; Banerjea, DHI, p. 98.
88. Ibid., p. 221-23, Jāngulī is also called Śavara, Kumārī which connects her with the aborginals.
89. She is called Viṣa-harī.
90. Bhattasali, op. cit., p. 223; The learned scholar has also shown the similarity between Manasā and Sarasvatī – Both being associated with Swan – both are Manasapurtri of Brahmā.
91. Vogel, J.P., op. cit., p. 278.
92. Gupta, B.A. Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials, p. 148.
93. Bhattasali places the aryanisation of Manasā cult in 10th – 11th Cent. A.D. On the basis of the biographer of Ċhaitanya he inform that worship of Manas was used to be performed during Chaitany's time (15th Cent. A.D.0. In south east Bengal Vijaya Gupta, of Phulla Sri who is the most famous poet of Manasā song states that the first of the Manasā song was one eyed Hari Dutta. He places Hari Dutta in 11th – 12th Cent. A.D. (op. cit., p. 22).
94. Śivarammurti, C., Parallets and Opposites in Indian Iconography, p. 94 She is Manasā with her child Astika in her lap.
95. ASIAR, 1926-27 p. 209.
96. Dr Banerjea holds that (Padmāvatī, the Sassana devatā of the 23rd Jina Parsavanatha is like him associated with Snakes and there little doubt that her Hindu Counterpart is the fold goddess Manasā one of whose names is also Padmāvatī or Padma. Ef. DHI, P. 563.
97. Pages, 2,26, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40 plates XII, A.B., XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVIIa, XVIII; figs. II (page 37).
98. Allen Grant, The Evolution of the Idea of God, 1931, p. 77.
99. Indian Culture, vol., X. p. 162.
100. Ibid, p. 161.
101. Ibid, p. 162; similar to Hārīti in Bengali society one goddess is Jaṭapahaṛiṇī who abducts or kills new born babies (Ibid., p. 162).
102. It is found in Chaitanaya Bhagavata (Vridayan Das, Cait, Bhag. 1.3 Vasumati Edition) that after the birth of Chaitanay the worship of Ṣaṣṭhī was performed on the 6th day (Ibid., p. 163).
103. ASIR, III, 1871-72, p. 156. She may be Bhavani also according to Cunningham.
104. Swami Sankarananda, Ṛgveda Culture of the Prehistoric Indus, Vol., I. p. 139.
105. Kādambarī p. 142-143.
106. Indian Culture X, p., 163.
107. Ibid., 163.
108. Baudhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra – edited by Shamasastri, pp. 294-96.
109. Ibid., Yasyasinbha rathe Yukta Vyaghra – acascapyanugaminali.
110. Banerjea, JN, DHI p. 382.
111. Ibid p. 382.
112. Ibid p, 382-83, Viṣṇu had to mutter rudra manta in order to protect himself from the baneful influence of Jyeṣṭhā.
113. M.C.P. Srivastaava op.cit., p. 134.
114. Mecdonell, Vedic Mythology, p. 120 – Niṛriṭi, Disease, Dissolution, appears about twelve times in the RV as a personification of presiding over death; AV I. 312 Griffith, AV, p. 36 Niṛriṭi. Decay or Destruction personified, the Goddess of misfortune. Death and Corruption.
115. There origin also is quite uncertain and we come across different accounts regarding it.
116. Kumbhi means the frontal globe on the forehead of an elephant – Gode P.K. and Karve C.G. Apte's The practical Sanskrit English Dictionary, pt., I p. 584.

117. Rao, T.A.G., EHI, Vol. I-II, pp. 394-400; An explanation of her worship is found in Saivagamas, the Siddhanta Saravali of Trilocana Śivacarya, where she is said to assume eight forms representing eight tattvas (for details see ibid., p. 398).
118. Matsya Purāṇa, 179, 10-32.
119. Chattopadhyaya, D., Lokāyata, p. 140: the hypothesis of Gaṇeśa becoming a god as a result of the elephant's assuming sovereignty over the other tribes (including rats) cannot but be very strage (p. 142) – Chattopadhyaya informs us about Matangas leaving impression on early Punch markedcoins (p. 142).
120. Crow, lion, elephant faces gaṇas are mentioned in the Mahābhārata as Skanda's attendants – it is interesting to note that donkey is also associated with Christ – This association with donkey has been taken to signify more by some scholars.
121. Rao, T.A.G., EHI Vol. I-II, pls CXXI, CXXII, CXXIII. She is frequently represented in Paliava and early Chola Art.
122. This shows her fold character.
123. Banerjea, J N DHI p. 382.
124. Banerjea J N DHI p. 383.
125. Ibid., p. 383 foot note I; *The Praṇāma mantra for Śītalā, namāmi śītalam devīṃ rasbhastham digainbarim marjjanikalasophetam supalankritamastakaim*
126. Ibid., p. 385.
127. JHQ 1938, Jtestha may also partially be recognized in the Kṣanka image of Alansami beaten out on the night of Dīpawali.
128. Man in India, III, p. 229.

117. Ibid., [illegible]
118. [illegible]
119. [illegible]
120. [illegible]
121. [illegible]
122. [illegible]
123. [illegible]
124. [illegible]
125. Ibid., [illegible]
126. Ibid., p. 285.
127. [illegible] origin of [illegible]
128. [illegible]

Chapter 4

DEVĪ – THE GREAT GODDESS

There are multiple dimension to the Great Goddess of India, the Devī, is related to other Hindu deities. Depending on who is asking the question and who is answering it, very different features of divinity, both male and female, come to the fore. At least two reasons exist for the easy, but multifaceted, coexistence of oneness and manyness that we observe in Hindu conceptions of Devī. One is the richness of vision that the classic text of Hindu Goddess worship, the Devī Mahātmya, offers, the other is the variety of significances that have been ascribed to this text in the Indian context. It is the purpose of this essay to explore the former of these – the vision of the Devī Mahātmya – in some detail and then to indicate some of the larger interpretive issues.[1]

It has long been recognized, by both devotees and the Devī Mahātmya is a text of unique significance to the Hindu religious tradition. The text, which forms a portion of one of the early Sanskrit Purāṇas, the Mārkanḍeya, was probably composed in or somewhat north of the Narmadā river valley sometime in the fifth or sixth century.[2] Yet it is no mere antiquarian curiosity. The Devī Mahātmya has, through the centuries, been copied by the faithful with such regularity that it no exists in virtually innumerable manuscripts. Its recitation forms part of the daily liturgy in temples dedicated to Durgā, as well as occupying a central place in the great autumnal festival of Durgā Pujā.[3] In a lecture delivered in 1840. H.H. Wilson ranked in "amongst the most popular works in the Sanskrit language," and to this day its hymns, in particular, are familiar to vast numbers of Hindus.[4] In 1823 it because the second Purāṇic text ever translated into a European language (English). Bu the turn of the century excerpts had appeared in French and another full English translation had been produced along with one in Latin and one in Greek.[5]

Of the various features of the Devī Mahātmya, one stands preeminent. The ultimate reality in the universe in here understood to be feminine: Devī, the Goddess. Moreover, the Devī Mahātmya appears to be the first Sanṣkrit text to provide a comprehensive – indeed well nigh relentless – articulation of such a vision. From the time of the Ṛgveda onward, of course, various goddesses had figured in Sanksrit tradition. But never before had ultimate reality itself been understood as Goddess.

Since the Goddess's varied and often highly nuanced relationship to male deities is particularly revealing of her nature, we shall first explore three "moments" – one from each of the three episodes in the Devī Mahātmya – that present this relationship in a particularly vivid fashion. As we shall see, although Devī is understood to bear a special relation to each particular deity, this is never a mere a mere consort relation. She is beyond being a consort to anyone. Then in an effort relation, she is beyond being consort to anyone. Then, in an effort to situate the Devī Mahātmya in the broader realism of Indian religious history, we will consider how certain of its myths and symbols had previously been employed in Sanskrit. As it turns out, certain affinities exist between the worship of Devī, as expounded in the Devī Mahātmya and other, quite various theological currents involving Agni and Skanda, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa Gopāla, Finally, against the backdrop of this inquiry into the text's content and historical context, we shall take brief note of the ongoing hermeneutics of the Devī Mahātmya, exploring how late Hindus and others have engaged with the text and its vision.

Devī's Identity – Three Moments

The structure of the Devī Mahātmya is both simple and beautifully symmetrical, consisting of a frame story and three myths that tell of Devī's various salvific activities. The first half of the frame story recounts how a king and a merchant, beset by mundane adversity, seek refuge from the turmoils of the world by retiring to the forest. There they encounter a sage, who informs them that their woes are due to the power of Mahātmāyā, a term that can mean either "she who possesses great deceptiveness" or "she who is the great deception. "Pressed for further details, the sage then recounts the three myths. The first that of Madhu and Kaiṭabha, offers a succinct delineation of the cosmic status of Devī. The second, a more extensive account of her origins on earth and her initial martial activities, culminates in her conquest of the dread buffalo-demon Mahiṣa. The third and longest myth is an exuberant celebration of her various forms and their role in her victory over the minions of the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. Finally, in the second half of the frame story, we learn how the king and the merchant then worship Devī. Their devotion merits her appearance, and she proceeds to answer their prayers.

The features of the first episode that commands our attention here is its characterization of Devī as Mahāmāyā, a designation that should probably be understood as a proper name. A preliminary indication of its significance can be found in the words with which the sage describes the goddess to the woebegone king and merchant:

> O best of men, human beings have a craving for offspring, out of greed expecting those (loved ones) to reciprocate: do you not see this? Just in this fashion do they fall into the pit of delusion the maelstrom of egotism, giving [apparent]

> solidity to life in this world through the power of Mahāmāyā. This blessed Devī Mahātmayā, having forcibly seized the minds, even, of men of knowledge, leads them to delusion .., She is [also] the supreme eternal knowledge that becomes the cause of release from bondage to mundane life. (I 39-40, 42, 44)[6]

The Devī Mahātmya seems here to reflect the view of the early Upaniṣads that it is mystical knowledge of ultimate truth that extricates one from the process of rebirth. But something else is clearly afoot as well, for Devī is not simply the knowledge that sets one free. She is also the great illusion that keeps oen bound. The Devī Mahātmya is not given to systematic philosophical exposition, so it does not endeavor to resolve this paradox. Rather, it rejoices in it, fro paradox is close to the heart of the Devī Mahātmya's view of Devī. In this regard, two features of earlier Sanskrit usage of the word māyā help clarify what the Devī Mahātmya means when it calls Devī "Mahātmaya".

First, the word Māyā is an old as the Ṛg Veda, where it means "wile" or "magic power," a power that is frequently associated with the assures, beings who in all but the earliest strata of Sanskrit literature, are understood as enemies of the gods. If māyā is thus associated with the demons, we might expect the Devī Mahātmaya to affirm that she who is Mahāmāyā is also the great demoness. This turns out to be precisely the manner in which Devī is praised later in this same episode: You are the great knowledge, the great illusion, the great insight, the great memory and the great delusion, the great Goddess, the great Demoness. To say that Devī is Mahāmāyā is thus to affirm that she is indeed Goddess, but it is also to affirm that she transcends the conventional distinction between devas and asuras. [7]

The second conceptual formulation that prior usage bequeaths to the Devī Mahātmya is the equation of māyā with prakṛti, the primordial matter that evolves into the manifest universe. It was in the philosophical school of Sāṃkhya that prakṛti received its classical development as one of the two fundamental principles of the universe, the other being puruṣa (spirit). This atheistic dualism had, however, been adapted to theistic philosophical needs long before the Devī Mahātmya was composed. In particular, that watershed of theistic speculation, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, had formulated the crucial issues in an illuminating way. Having explained the distinction between the lord and the individual soul, the next then related them both to māyā:

> The Vedas, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the acts of devotion, the past, the future and what the Vedas declare- all this does the Lord pour forth out of this and in it is the other confined by māyā. Know māyā to be prakṛti and the possessor of māyā to be the great lord. This whole world is pervaded by beings that are part of him (4.9-10).

It would be risky to rely on a narrow interpretation of such philosophically pregnant concepts as māyā and prakṛti. [8] Nonetheless, the Devī Mahātmaya is inclined to favor their identification in a way that is reminiscent of the Śvetāśvatāra. Thus, in the first episode Mahāmāyā is addressed in hymns with the affirmation. "You are the prakṛti of all, manifesting the triad of constituent strands," and later on, with the confession, "You are the supreme, original, untrasformed prakṛti. On the basis of such passages it seems safe to say that the Devī Mahātmaya has shifted the focus of the Sāṃkhya school and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad by understanding prakṛti not as the material shroud or possession of spirit but as itself supremely divine, as Devī herself.

By way of summarizing these various implications of the designation "Mahāmāyā, "let us consider the myth recounted in this first episode. As part of his introduction to Devī, the sage declares: "The yogic slumber of the lord of the worlds, Viṣṇu, is [this same] Mahāmāyā and through her is this world being deluded". Such a declaration enables him to move directly to the myth, which involved Viṣṇu, Yoganidrā, and the asuras Madhu and Kaiṭabha. But in order to appreciate the unique features of the Devī Mahātmya's version, we must ascertain the resonance of this particular myth at the time the Devī Mahātmya was written.

Throughout the Mahābhārata, the Madhu-Kaiṭabha myth is associated, virtually without exception, with the figure of Viṣṇu. The myth is recounted in full on several occasions, and Viṣṇu's epithet madhusudana, "slayer of madhu", occurs in the epic more than two hundred times. The classical version of the myth can be summarized as follows. It is the time of *pralaya*, the state of dissolution that occurs at the end of a cosmic cycle. All that exists is the universal ocean. On the ocean, lord Viṣṇu sleeps, lying on his serpent, Śeṣa, who is coiled into the shape of a coach. While Viṣṇu sleeps, two asuras named Madhu and Kaiṭabha arise from the war in his ear and, puffed up with pride and egotism, begin to assail the god Brahmā, who is seated on the lotus that grows from Viṣṇu's navel. Brahmā awakens Viṣṇu by shaking the lotus, whereupon Viṣṇu engages the two demons in battle, sometimes physically, sometimes in a contest of wits. Given that nothing but ocean exists, Madhu and Kaiṭabha think they have outwitted Viṣṇu by asking to be slain in a dry place. But Viṣṇu raises his thighs and kills the demons on them. From the fat of the two asuras, which then permeated the waters, the earth was created.

In the Devī-Mahātmya's retelling of this thoroughly Vaiṣṇava myth are several crucial modifications. Although the setting is exactly the same, Viṣṇu is described as having entered into Yoganidrā, the twilight slumber of tranquility, a term not used in the epic. The demons begin their assault upon Brahmā, who again endeavors to awaken Viṣṇu. He does so here, however, not by shaking the lotus but by invoking Devī, who is addressed as Yoganidrā, that is, as the personification of the state of sleep into which Viṣṇu has entered.

Devī then accedes to Brahmā's request by withdrawing from Viṣṇu's various limbs, Viṣṇu awakens and the asuras are dispatched, as in earlier versions.

Several conclusions seem to follow from this account. First, the Devī-Mahātmya clearly suggests that it is solely through the grace, the gracious withdrawal of Devī that Viṣṇu can fulfill his familiar duty of slaying the asuras. In fact, it is only through this grace that he can act at all. And if this is true of lord Viṣṇu, the implication is that each of us human beings is similarly indebted to her. Second, Devī is held to be the primary ontological reality. From her the gods explicitly derives their bodily form, and from her, as well, all material existence precedes. This is evident both from the prior affirmation that Devī is prakṛti and from the suggestion that it is the substance of the asuras that comes to form the earth – for Devī is, we have noted, the great asuri. One might go so far as to say that whatever is Devī. Finally, the text reveals the paradoxical action of Devī Mahātmya. It suggests, on the one hand, that it is she who deludes the two self-important demons into thinking they can outwit the divine. But, on the other hand, it is also she who shows how, through the frustration of their egotistical desires and their apparent death, those same demons come to participate in a divine plan far larger than themselves – indeed, in the cosmic process of creation. Devī is both the great deluder and the one who redeems the victims of her magic tricks by incorporating them into the life divine.

The event from the second episode that is of interest to us may be dealt with more briefly. This is the point at which the exit, having established Devī's comsic status, turns to an account of her career on earth. It is apparent from the outset that the event precipitating that career is the severe dislocation of the mundane equilibrium. The second episode thus begins.

> Once upon a time, a battle between the gods and asuras raged for a full hundred years, when [the buffalo-demon] Mahiṣa was leader of the asuras and Indra [was leader] of the Gods. The gods army was conquered there by the mighty asuras, and having conquered all the gods, the asura Mahiṣa became lord (literally, "Mahiṣa became Indra"). (2.1-2)

Faced with this quandary, the remnants of the devas army seek out Śiva and Viṣṇu and describe the course of events. There follows the famous account of Devī's origin as a force on earth:

> Having listened to the worlds of the gods, Viṣṇu and Śiva became angry, with rage, came forth a great fiery splendor of Brahmā and Śiva. And from the bodies of Indra and the other gods came forth a great fiery splendor and it became unified in one place. An exceedingly fiery mass like a flaming mountain did the gods see there, filling the firmament with flames. That peerless splendor, born of eh bodies of all the gods, unified and pervading the three worlds with her splendor, became a woman. (2.8-12)

Our text then recounts how this woman – who is, of course, Devī – received her various limbs and weapons from different gods and how, thus constituted, she proceeded to vanquish Mahiṣa and his hordes.

From the perspective of our concern with Devī's relation to specific male deities, two comments are in order. First, whereas there is justification for saying that Devī is here conceptualized as subordinate to the gods – because she is derivative from, and indebted to each of them – it can also be argued that the reverse is true. It is she who succeeds in restoring equilibrium on earth, a fear that the gods, both individually and collectively had been unable to accomplish. Moreover, it is clear that, despite having been derived from the gods. Devī is subsequently understood to be a continuing, independent salvific presence in the world. Thus at the end of this episode she consents to bring relief to those who will call upon her in future calamities. Moreover, the episode concludes not by having her dissipate into the bodies of the gods but by stating simply, yet suggestively, "She vanished" (4.30-33).

Second we must note the conceptual model that the Devī-Mahātmya employs here is describing Devī. The first episode in the text established her primacy in the cosmic context. Now the second endeavors to demonstrate not only that Devī also has an earthly career but that she is the supreme ruler of earthly creatures. To portray Devī in this role, the Devī-Mahātmya draws on a classical Indian model, that of the king as described in a classic text, The Laws of Manu. As part of his vision of social order, Manu, the ascribed author, begins his account of the king as follows:

> When this world was without a king and people ran about in all directions out of fear, the Lord emitted a king in order to guard this entire (realm), taking lasting elements from Indra, the Wind, Yama, the Sun, Fire, Varuna, the Moon, and Kubera (the Lord of Wealth). Because a king is made from particles of these lords of the gods, therefore the surpasses all living beings in brilliant energy, and like the Sun, he burns eyes and hearts, and no one on earth is able even to look at him... In order to make justice succeed, he takes all forms again and again, taking into consideration realistically what is to be done (his) power, and the time and place. The lotus goddess of Good fortune resides in his favour, victor in his aggression and death in his anger for he is made of the brilliant energy of all (the gods).[9]

The conclusion that this model of secular power underlines the Devī-Mahātmya's vision of Devī's earthly origin seems inescapable. That such a model is utterly appropriate seems equally obvious, for only one whose power in the world's own terms, is unrivaled can cope with the great disturber of the mundane equilibrium, Mahiṣa. The Devī-Mahātmya thus affirms that the effective agent on earth, as in the cosmos, is not masculine but feminine, not king but queen.

Finally we must examine the Devī Mahātmaya's use of the term Śakti "power", with regard to Devī, particularly in the third episode. As we have already seen, the Devī Mahātmya understands Śakti as a singular and universal phenomenon – as a phenomenon that Devī simply is. But in addition, it understands Śaktis as plural and particular phenomena, as something that each individual deity has. This latter conceptualization emerges in the course of Devī's martial engagement with the asura Śumbha and Niśumbha. When Śumbha, incensed at the destruction of two of his generals, sends forth his legions against Devī, she multiplies her own forces:

> At that very moment, O King, in order to destroy the enemies of the gods and for the sake of the well-being of the suprement gods, very valorous and powerful Śaktis, having the form of each [of them], approached Devī, whatever form, ornament, and mount a particular god possessed with that very form did his śakti go forth to fight the asuras. (8.11-13)

The text then describes how severn Śaktis emerged from seven gods, each possessing the distinctive iconographic features of its source. These Śaktis are named Brahmāṇī, Maheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varāhī, Narasinṃhī and Aindrī. Together with another figure whom we shall consider in a moment, they are referred to collectively in the ensuring combat as "the Mothers".

Four features of this passage and its consequent development deserve our attention. First, it is tempting to conclude that the text views each god as having a consort who is called a Śakti and is a form of Devī. But closer examination reveals quite a different situation. In fact, the Devī-Mahātmya is careful to avoid using language that would imply that the Śaktis are consorts of their respective gods. This is evident from the fact that in the mythology current at the time that the Devī-Mahātmya was composed, two of the gods who here put forth Śaktis – Indra and Śiva (Maheśvara) – were already acknowledged to have consorts. Indira's spouse has been known since Ṛg Vedic times as Indrāṇī or Sācī, while Śiva's spouse is referred to throughout the Mahābhārata as Umā or Pārvatī. India's spouse has never before been designated by the word Aindrī, however and Umā is called Maheśvarī on only one known occasion (Mahābhārata 14.43.14). Consequently, when the Devī-Mahātmya calls Indra's Śakti Aindrī, the one relaed to Indra, and "Śiva's Śakti Maheśvarī," "the one related to Maheśvara," It apparently whishes to make clear that a god's Śakti is not the same as any previously recognized consort of his. A Śakti does not have the merely formal and external relation of a consort with her god. Rather, she is far more fundamental, more internal, to his identity, for she is in fact his power.

Second it is clear that although the polarity of Śiva and Śakti is well known in later Śākta and tantric circles, the Devī Mahātmya shows no preference for Śiva when discussing Devī as Śakti. The only special attention paid to Śiva at this juncture is that, after their emergence, the Śaktis are said to gather around him. However, no particular importance is attached to this fact.

Third, an even more striking contrast with later views emerges from the fact that the Devī-Mahātmya does not recognize that a Śakti is feminine and that its possessor or vehicle is masculine – for Devī herself possesses a Śakti. Immediately after the previously named Śaktis have gathered around Śiva, the next declares: Then from the body of Devī came forth the very frightening Śakti of Caṇḍikā (Devī) gruesome and yelping (like) a hundred jackals. In the subsequent combat, this Śakti is treated as kindred to the other Śaktis, as one of the mothers.

Finally, for all this proliferation of forms of Devī and for all the involvement of some of them with male deities, our text never loses sight of the fact that Devī is the primary reality and that her agency is the only effective one. This is indicated at the very end of the episode, where the text sets the stage for the final dramatic encounter by reducing the combatants to the bare minimum. The demon Śumbha has accused Devī of false pride and haughtiness, fro in the foregoing encounters she has relied not on her own strength but on that of others. At this point, Devī proclaims her relation to the apparently heterogeneous form of the Goddess. "I alone exist here in the world; what second, other than I, is there? O wicked one, behold these my hierophanies (or "extraordinary power": vibhutayah) entering [back] into me" (10.3). The text continues: "Thereupon, all the goddesses, led by Brahmāṇī, went to their resting place in the body of Devī; then there was just Devī alone". Subsequently, Devī throws down the gauntlet for the final combat: "When I was established here in many forms, it was by means of my extraordinary power. That has now been withdrawn by me. I stand utterly alone. May you be resolute in combat."

Our text thus concludes as it began, with the assertion that there is be one truly ultimate reality and that it is feminine, with the indication that the reality takes on different forms, to which the ignorant impute independent and permanent existence but which the wise recognize as grounded in Devī and with the demonstration that this reality is related to male deities, as a all that exists, not externally but internally – not as consort, but as Śakti.[10]

Involving Devī

Quite apart from the conceptual structure of the Devī Mahātmya, there is historical dimension to the synthesis it accomplishes, and this, too, contributes to the diverse emphases that the late tradition places on this classical text of Devī. We may here glance briefly at four distinct strands that appear to feed into the Devī-Mahātmya's synthetic vision of Devī.

First, scholars are virtually unanimous in the opinion that the basic impulse behind the worship of the Goddess in India is of non-Aryan, non – sanskriti origin. For all its brilliance in incorporating diverse Sanskrit more into its vision of Devī, the Devī Mahātmya, too, seems to support this view. Thus, for instance, the most common designation of Devī in this text other than the word devī itself) is caṇḍikā, which probably means "the violent as impetuous one" but which is used throughout as a proper name. Although feminine forms of the adjective canda exist in earlier texts, never prior to Devī-Mahātmya does the word caṇḍikā appears in Sanskrit.[11] Since the Devī-Mahātmya attests to the existence of a cult of Devī (12.1-12), it sees sensible that we should look for the historical origin of her worship in non Sanskritic circles, in the worship of a deity known as Caṇḍikā.[12]

Second, although the Devī-Mahātmya does not understand Devī to be a consort of Śiva, there is some evidence that her worship ad her identity intertwined with those of Śiva. After Caṇḍikā, the second most frequent name for Devī in the Devī- Mahātmya is Ambikā, a name associated in the vedic texts with the nascent figure of Rudra Śiva. In addition, there is intriguing fact that the destruction of Mahiṣa, which the Devī-Mahātmaya as subsequent Purāṇic literature clearly ascribe to Devī, had previously been recounted in the Mahābhārata, where it appears as the crowing event in a epic's first account of the birth and early carret of Skanda. Skanda is course, known throughout the Purāṇas as the offspring of Śiva and Umā yet the Mahābhārata takes a somewhat different tack. Its account is extra dinarily complicated – largely because at this juncture Skanda is a new figure in Sanskrit mythology, one whose genealogy is unclear – but also as suggestive. Throughout the account, Agni's claims to the pattern of Skanda predominate over those of Śiva. At the same time, it is immediately after Śiva's claims are introduced that the narrative reach its climax by telling of Mahiṣa's defeat at the hands of Skanda, Moreover, although the identity of Skanda's rightful mother is never clearly determined, embryonic "Goddess motifs" abound. One candidate for motherhood is a horde of ogresses euphemistically called "the Mothers," in addition to which are several momentary appearances by a goddess named Śakti One cannot help but feel that, at least mythologically and perhaps liturgically as well, Devī's identity emerges out of a matrix in which Śiva, Skanda, and Agni also figure prominently.[13]

Third, as we have seen, the Devī-Mahātmaya incorporates the familiar Vaiṣṇava myth of Madhu and Kaiṭabha and conceptualizes the Goddess in a way that resembles Manu's conceptualization of the king. There are also further indications of historical interaction between Vaiṣṇavism and the worship of Devī. The regal imagery of the second episode, for instance, has a distinctly Vaiṣṇava aura to it, and the way in which the Goddess enumerates her future appearances is strongly reminiscent of the Bhagavad Gita's teaching of the Lord's incarnations (avatāras).[14] Further, we learn from the critical edition of the Mahābhārata that just prior to the Bhagavad-Gita's a number of manuscripts insert one of the earliest Sanskrit hymns to the Goddess, known as the Durgā Stoṭra. This insertion would seem to reflect the redactors sense that there is a natural connection between Kṛṣṇa and Devī. Similarly, there has been an ongoing, but usually only implicit, relationship between the Bhagavad Gita and the Devī Mahātmya, evidenced by the fact that the seven hundred verses of eh former appear to have been the model for giving the Devī-Mahātmaya the very popular alternative title Durgā Saptaśatī, "Seven Hundred (verses) to Durgā.[15]

Finally, the Devī Mahātmya provides further evidence for the relation that Charlotte Vaudeville has perceived between Devī and Kṛṣṇa Gopāla, for references to the myth of Śumbha and Nisumabha are found earlier only in Kṛṣṇaite documents.[16] In the Harivansa's account of Kṛṣṇa's childhood, Viṣṇu descends to hell to solicit eh aid of the goddess Nidra. He proposes a plan for his birth and that of the goddess to Devakī and Yasoda, and then foretells the future course of events. Among other things he predicts that this goddess will slay the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha (47-49).[17] Later (65-51) the text asserts that she has, in fact, slain them. This connection between a Śumbha-Niśumbha-Goddess myth and the Kṛṣṇa Gopāla cycle is evidently more than a product of chance, for reference to such a myth also occurs in the Kṛṣṇa story told in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (5.1.81) and in Bhāsa's Bālacarita (2.20-25. Vaudeville has argues persuasively that the tales about Kṛṣṇa Gopāla originated as a cycle of hero stories among the non-Aryan castes of North India, who were predominantly worshipers of Devī. The implications for our understanding of the Devī-Mahātmya would thus seem clear. What we have in the Śumbha-Niśumbha myth is a fragment of the mythology of Devī as it was current among certain North Indian peoples who came to know the heroic exploits of Kṛṣṇa Gopāla. Just as those exploits went on to receive sophisticated religious elaboration in the manifold expressions of Kṛṣṇa bhakti, so too, did the Śumbha-Nasumbha-Goddess story become integrated with other mythological motifs and receive its elaboration in such texts as the Devī Mahātmya.

Interpreting the Devī Mahātmya

Given, then, that the Devī Mahātmya accomplishes a conceptually rich synthesis of diverse religious strands, what ramifications has this vision had for Hindu religious life in later centuries? Is it possible to understand the consequences of the text's existence as readily as we have identified the elements that fed into it? If so, what are they?

Our answers to these questions must be a good deal more fragmentary and tentative than we might wish, in part because a comprehensive history of Devī's worship – toward which this volume is a contribution – has yet to be written and in part because the hermeneutical questions involved in understanding the relation between texts and religious life in India are so complex. To conclude this essay, let me identify four different angels from which the later tradition has engaged the Devī-Mahātmya. Although each has sought to bring the text into a conversation with quite different features of Hindu life, together they provide a fair indication of the range of Devī's presence in Indian lives, past and present.

First, if we constitute a phenomenology of the Devī-Mahātmya in the narrowest sense, by asking what it is that people do with the words of the text, the answer is simple. They recite them. This could, of course, be said of most religious compositions in India, which have tended to live orally and in performance, rather than constituting the written basis for commentary and exegesis. But the Devī-Mahātmya is one of the extreme cases of this oral emphasis, for its words have been understood to embody a unique and eternal power, which is released solely through the proper ritual preparation and verbatim recitation of the words. It is mantra is in almost exactly the same way that the Ṛg-Veda is mantra. It is the form of the words, as opposed to their content, that commands attention. The chief concern of commentators has therefore been the precise enumeration of verses and the exact specification of the ritual activity that should attend their recitation. Today, and for centuries past, the Devī-Mahatyma has been regarded as an extraordinarily potent mantra. Professional reciters abound, and recitation of the text is thought to be effective in accomplishing a great range of goals, usually worldly ones – from passing an examination to ending a family quarrel sought by the individual who purchase the services of the recite. In a devotional context, recitation is also understood to be pleasing to Devī in one or another of her many guises. If thus forms part of both private and public worship in a great many ways, whether the particular theology be Tantric monism or the modified dualism of bhakti.[18]

Second, while the Devī Mahātmya remains chiefly a recited text, its mantras also have "meaning of another sort, fro together they constitute one of the principal scriptural delineations of the goddess. The text is to be understood as well as chanted, and consequently in the editions available in the … bazaar the Sanskrit stanzas are given together with their … translation. The oral and performative life of religious words has only very recently begun to command scholarly attention: exploration of the complex relationship between the recitation of a text and the understanding that a recite (or a recite's patron) has of that text has scarcely begun. With regard to the Devī Mahātmya, the crucial work to date is that of Cynthia-Humes, whose interviews with reciters and devotees lend great subtlety to our understanding of Devī and her worship. We know no, for instance, that recitation of the Devī-Mahātmya in Sanskrit is dominated by men, whereas women usually recite vernacular translation.[19] This is turn tends to produce interesting devotional convergences between recitation of the Devī-Mahātmya and folk songs, a traditional form of women's religious of the Devī-Mahātmya and folk songs, a traditional form of women's religious expression. Similarly, with regard to contemporary interpretation of the story, Human documents a widespread consensus between men and women that Devī is more mother than warrior and that she may even be married, judgments that clearly downplay certain elements of the narrative. As Humes also reports, both men and women agree that, while Devī shares characteristics such as creativity, power, and maternity with human women, she is not to be understood as a role model for humans – although a few women informants demur on this point.

Third, recent anthropological study has demonstrated that text based ideas about Devī are women into popular practice in complex, nonlinear ways. Akos Ostor, for instance, is deliberately concerned not to privilege texts in his analysis of life in a Bengali town. And yet he discovers a sticking and close correspondence between the categories villagers use to understand their everyday experience, particularly during the great annual Durgā Pujā festival and the categories employed in the popular understanding of the Devī Mahātmya.[20] The story of Devī is quite unself-consciously woven into the very fabric of the social order and of daily behavior. Similarly, both Alf Hilteebeitel, drawing on texts and fieldwork in Tamilnadu, and William Sax, in his recent study of Goddess pilgrimage in the Himalayas, have explored how different regional traditions rework basic aspects of Devī's mythology in the light of local approaches to politics, social order, gender relations, and ritual practice. As the anthropological record is beginning to show, while the story of the Goddess and her buffalo antagonist is known throughout the subcontinent, its contemporary significance and its bearing on local culture are always a function of particular historical events, often in the distant past. In anthropological terms, to speak of Devī as a generic Hindu deity is therefore often problematic, for her identify is always strongly colored by local custom.

Finally, given that Devī's identity is so intimately interconnected with the myths about her, it comes as no surprise that psychoanalytic theory, with its attention to dreams and myths, has figured in several contemporary interpretations of the Hindu Goddess. With this broadening of disciplinary perspectives, however, it becomes sill more difficult to offer generalized interpretations of Devī and her worship. For instance, the Indian psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar has argued that the mythology of Devī provides "the hegemonic narrative" of Hindu culture as far as male development is concerned" and that "certain forms of the maternal feminine may be more central in Indian myths and psyche than in their Western counterparts. More recently, Stanley Kurtz has gone much further, arguing that the dynamics of Indian child rearing practices call for a radial reshaping of psychoanalytic concepts. The theology of the one and the many as it emerges in Hindu conceptions of Devī finds a social parallel in the practice of joint mothering and Freud's Oedipus complex must give way in the Indian context to what Kurtz calls "the Durgā complex." To evaluate such an argument would take us well beyond the scope of this essay. But it serves as a fitting reminder of the varied ways that Devī has seized the human imagination, whether devotional or academic, for millennia in India and now in many other places throughout the world.

Indeed, Devī may be accepted as the great-goddess.

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6. For full documentation of this point, see coburn, Thomas B., Devī-Mahātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition Delhi and Columbia, 1985; hereafter cited as Crystallization, pp. 51-52
7. J S Hawley and Donna Maria Wulff op.cit. p. 33
8. The same Sanskrit word Māyā has for example been extensively explored in the philosophical discussions of the Vedanta school.
9. Wendy Dongier, (trans), with Brian K Smith, The Laws of Manu London: Penguin Books, 1991, 7.3-6, 10-11, p. 128
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13. Wendy Donoger O Flaherty, Asceticism and eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva London: 1973 pp. 90-100
14. The appendix to the Devī-Mahātmya known as the Pradhanika Rahasya goes so far as to characterize the text as an account of "the avatāras of Canḍikā"
15. Thomas B. Coburn op.cit., p. 139-40
16. Vaudeville's "Kṛṣṇa Gopāla, Radha and the Great Goddess, in the Divine Consort ed. Hawley and Wulff, pp. 1-12
17. References are to the critical edition of the Harivamsa, ed., P.L. Vaidya, 2 vols. Poona 1969, 1971.
18. In Encountering the Goddess, pp. 159-69.

19. See Humes's "The Text and Temple of the Great Goddess: The Devī-Mahātmya and the Vindhyacala Temple of Mirzapur" Ph.D. dissertation University of Iowa, 1990. See also her "Glorifying the Great Goddess or Great Woman? Women's Experience in Ritual Recitation of the Devī-Mahātmya, in Women and Goddess Traditions, (ed.,) Karen King Minneapolis: on which the balance of this paragraph is based, as well as Humes's chapter adopted. On the per formative dimension of religious texts more generally and William A Graham, Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion New York, 1987.

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Chapter 5

TANTRA IN MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

"Perfection of Insight" is the translation of the term *prajnāpāramitā*, but not here employed in its sense of a certain body of Buddhist literature, namely the *Prajnāpāramitā* scriptures. The present discussion of *prajnāpāramitā* will show that it is through misunderstanding the role of this faculty that the status of Buddhist Tantra has been falsely explained, as though Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tantra under the name of Mantrayāna are two distinct and different things. [1]

This is not to deny that if one takes tantric practices historically in the sense of obscure cults which probably existed in India before even the rise of early Buddhism; those are essentially different from Mahāyāna. But also such obscure cults are different from what we now have as Buddhist Tantra, in terms of Tantric literature and associated practices. That is to say, both the Hindu Tantras and the Buddhist Tantras have thoroughly integrated those obscure cults into sectarian forms,. The Buddhist Tantras are so imbued with Buddhist terminology, mainly of Mahāyāna Buddhist variety, that it is necessary to first study Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in its formal presentation in the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools; otherwise one would be trying to find some mystical tantric meaning in an obscure phrase which in fact is clear enough when recognized as a Buddhist tenet from the Abhidharma literature or form those two Mahāyāna schools. Therefore, it is completely pointless to say, as some critics do, that the BudhistTantra is based on degenerate cults but that in some works the monks cleaned and tidied them up to give them a respectable from. Since the Tantra is essentially a practice with incantations breath control and so forth, one must evaluate it by the way it is as set forth in its principal "revealed" scriptures, authoritative commentaries, and actual practice as can still be observed.

According to passages cited by Tson-kha-pa in the introductory section of his work on the stages of Tantra called Snags rim chenmo, the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) has two divisions – the *prajnā-pāramitā* method (that part of Mahāyāna which is not tantric) and the mantra method (the strictly tantric part of the Mahāyāna). In this quotation from the Kālacakra work Vimalaprabhā, these two wings of the Mahāyāna are termed "cause" and "effect". But also the Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayāna) – so called because the diamond is unsplitable and unbreakable – can be considered the Vehicle that incorporates both the *prajnāpāramitā* side (the "cause") and the mantra side (the "effect"). Therefore, the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas (who are the Mahāyāna saints) has two degrees, first the perfection of insight (pranjāpāramitā) and then the practice of mantras, initiation in the manḍala, etc. To observe this in a textual way, the reader may refer to the final section of this work for the "Outline of the ThobYigGsalBahi Me Lon," and notice how this compendium first gives the non-tantric background for the Tantras, and then the Tanras. Tsoh-kha-pa introduces further terminology with a passage from the Sekoddesa.[2]

Holding the form of the void is the cause;
The fruit is the adherence to incessant compassion.

The indissoluble union of voidness (Śūnyata) and compassion (Karuṇā) is called "mind of enlightenment" (bodhicitta).

He also quotes the Tantra called *Vajrapanjara*, as follows:

(1) If he void were the means (Upāya), then there would be no Buddhahood, because the fruit would not be different from the cause. The means is not voidness.
(2) Voidness has been taught by the Buddhas to ward off the adherence to a self on the part of those who have gone astray through views and of those who seek the view of self.
(3) Hence the binding as the means of ecstasy is called the manḍala – circle. The yogin with pride of a Buddha is close to Buddhahood.
(4) So he would accomplish with the means the thirty-two characteristics of the Teacher, along with the eighty minor marks of the Lord (prabhu). The means has the form of the Teacher. [3]

Tson-kha-pa gives the key ideas of those four verses in their order: (1) rejecting the claim that exclusive contemplation of voidness is the means (2) the requirement to teach voidness; (3) accompaniment of the great means which is not shared (with the *Prajnāpāramitā* way) (4) teaching reasons for requiring accomplishment with that means. The meaning of the manḍala as the unshared means is that in the *Prajnāpāramitā* way, the means is the first five perfections, of giving morality, forbearance, striving, and meditation; with the perfection of insight as the sixth. He points out that the five perfections go with accomplishing enlightenment in three incalculable eons. When the manḍala circle (of deities) is taken as the means with ecstasy due to "binding" of the male and female deities, this shows devata-yoga (yoga of the deities) and produces divine pride (free from ordinary pride) which is the quick path to Buddhahood, that is to say, to acquirement of the two kinds of formal body (rupa-kāyā), the Saṁbhogakāya and the Nirmāṇakāya is the present life. Therefore, those four verses from the *Vajrapanjara* are important for elucidating this fundamental position of the Buddhist Tantra - the quick path. According to Tson-kha-pa, the same ideas can be garnered from other Tantras.

But while the Mantra way differs from the *Prajnāpāramitā* way as concerns the means, and therefore differs as regards fastness and slowness in attaining the goal of Buddhahood, Tson-kha-pa points out and by subsequent citation of Mahāyāna sutras, that there is no difference in terms of *Prajnāpāramitā* (perfection of insight) itself. He says (perhaps referring to Tibetan polyandry).

> A mother is the shared cause of the sons. A father is the cause of diversifying their lineages. In the same way, the Mother Perfection of Insight is the shared cause of the four sons; while the cause of diversifying the great and lesser lineages of their vehicles is the means consisting in generating the mind (of enlightenment), and so forth.

That is to say, a difference in means (considered to be the father) diversifies the Hinayana into the Śrāvakayāna and the Pratyekabuddhayana; while another difference in means diversifies the Mahāyāna into Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. But the Perfection of Insight (considered to be the mother) is the same for all the four sons; and in consideration ofthis Mother of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, such a scripture as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika* (The Lotus of the Illustrious Law) sets forth the thesis of One Vehicle. [4]

This insistence that the *Prajnāpāramitā* of the "*Prajnāpāramitā* vehicle and of the "Mantra vehicle" is the common Mother lets us conclude that even when *Prajnāpāramitā* is persounified as a goddess and represented in tantric iconography in union with the Buddha, that in fact it is still the same *Prajnāpāramitā* as is mentioned in the *Prajnāpāramitā* scriptures and in the various non-tantric Mahāyāna scriptures. But saying this will undoubtedly not satisfy the critics – both within and without the fold of Buddhism – who denounce the Buddhist Tantras as a degenerate development within late Buddhism. They will surely retort that it is a fine thing to extract this from a book, but that in practice Tantras has a worship of the female element in tis concrete form of the woman. The ready answer of course is that one cannot deny such practices in some lineages of the Tantra, and that the same Tantra, by reason of metaphorical employment of words, can be understood differently. But to be practical, it is passing strange that anyone would bother with the Tantra to justify his "degenerate" practice, fro who so bent among worldly persons would divert his energies by muttering a mantra a hundred thousand times at dawn, noon, sunset, and midnight, with fasting and other inhibitions, to engage in a "degenerate" practice, when, a we know so well, people at large engages in degenerate practices without bothering to mortify themselves at dawn, noon, sunset and midnight.

According to Tson-kha-pa, *Prajnāpāramitā* is the common Mother, and invite the reader to determine for himself if certain studies contained in the present work bear out this contention. And for the meaning of Mother, let it be understand that *Prajṅā* is by no means a virgin, since from time immemorial, according to Buddhist teachings, mankind has been defiling this prajna which is their own insight. Thus the course of *prajnā* is not, as in ordinary human terms, from innocence to loss of a pristine state, but rather from original defilement to the pure goddess state. The Buddhist *prajnā* is not like the Hindu Śakti, the new power created by the gods to wreak havoc on their opponents, the Asuras; but the old passive faculty become powerful for helping some beings over the opposition to be godlike. That is to say, the Hindu Śakti has a mythological base, whereas the Buddhist *prajnā* is rooted in man's psyche as the ordinary ingredient of every day thinking. In the Hindu theory, the gods have to come up with a new plan; in the Buddhist conception, man must find a new role for his capacities. In this light, the Hindu Śakti and the Buddhist tantric prajna do have something in common, but it is not proper to identify them.

Perhaps there is no clearer example of the tantric goddess as accessory to enlightenment than the personification in the *Śrīcakrasaṁvara* tradition of the thirty seven *bodhipākṣya dharrmah* as goddesses. This identification is found in Lui-pa's Sri *Bhāgavadabhiṣamāyanāmā* and there could be no higher authority for this, since Lui-pa is among the most famous of the masters of the Mother Tantra.[5] In utilizing his text as preserved in Tibetan translation in the Tanjur, it was helpful to take advantage of Abhayakaragupta's *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, wherein is presented the Sambara-manḍala containing all the Sanskrit names of the principal deities of the Sricakarasamvara-tantra. It is of interest that the central deity, under the name Sri-Heruka is given the correspondence to "right Samadhi" instead of his consort, but the obvious meaning is that he is here present with his female side, usually called *Vajravarāhī* (the Diamond Sow). The thirty seven natures accessory to enlightenment (bodhipaksya-dharma) is an important feature of the path both for early and later non-tantric Buddhism. The identifications follow:[6]

1. Station of mindfulness on bodies - Ḍākinī
2. Station of mindfulness on feelings - Lāmā
3. Station of mindfulness on natures - Khanḍaroha
4. Station of mindfulness on thoughts - Rupinī
5. Base of magical power in longing - Pracanḍa
6. Base of magical power in striving - Pracanḍaksa
7. Base of magical power in analysis - Prabhavatī
8. Base of magical power in thought - Mahānāsā
9. Faculty of faith - Vīramatī
10. Faculty of Striving - Kharvaryi
11. Faculty of mindfulness - Lankeśvaryī
12. Faculty of Samādhi - Drumacchāyā
13. Faculty of insight - Ariāvatī
14. Power of faith - Mahābhairava
15. Power of striving - Vāyuvega
16. Power of mindfulness - Surabhaksī
17. Power of Saṃādhi - Syamadevi
18. Power of inṣight - Subhadra
19. Samādhi limb of enlightenment - Hayakarṇī

20. Sriving limb of enlightenment - Khagaṇana
21. Joy limb of enlightenment - Cakravega
22. Cathartic limb of enlightenment - Khanḍaroḥa
23. Anyalysis-of-the-doctrine limb of enlightenment – Saundini
24. Mindfulness limb of enlightenment - Cakravarmini
25. Equanimity limb of enlightenment - Suvirā
26. Right understanding - Mahābālā
27. Right conception - Cakravartinī
28. Right Speech - Mahāvirya
29. Right bodily action - Kakāsẏa
30. Right livelihood - Ulakasẏa
31. Right effort - Svanasya
32. Right mindfulness - Sukarasya
33. Right Samadhi - Sri-Heruka
34. Generation of the virtuous natures so far not arisen – Yamadāhī
35. Protection of the virtuous natures that have arisen – Yamadūti
36. Elimination of the singul natures ṭhat have arisen – Yamadanstṛī
37. Avoidance of the sinful natures so far not arisen – Yamamathāṇī

That takes account of all the goddesses of the Sambara-manḍala, if we accept that Vajravarāhī is included is included in Sri-Heruka, which is course is the meaning of their mystic union. Besides, all the goddesses have parental Buddhas. Nos. 1-4 are the ḍākinī-s under Raṇeśa (=Ratnasambhava). 5-12 are the Circle of Mind (citta-cakra) under Aksobhya, and they range in the sky. 13-20 are the circle of speech (vak-Cakra) under Amitābh and they range upon earth. 21-28 are the Circle of Body (kāyā-cakra) under Śāśvata (=Vairocana), and they range beneath the earth. 29-32 and 34-37 are the Pledge Circle (samaya-cakra) under Amoghasiddhi; and 33 (the manḍala-lord) is under Aksobhya; his Diamond Sow side is under Vairocana.

> Tson-kha-pa (Lhasa Collected Works, Ta, 'dodjo', 112a-4) explains Nos. 26-33 (the Eightfold Noble Path) in this context:
> "Right understanding": Great devotion to the Word of the Buddha.
> "Right conception": The errorless comprehension of its meaning, and not casting aside a project which is good to do.
> "Right speech": Having words that do not deceive the sentient beings, and free from lies.
> "Right bodily action": Not transgressing the ten virtues in all that is done.
> "Right effort": Performing the virtuous acts of bowing, circumambulating, etc.
> "Right mindfulness": Being mindful of the word of the Victor.
> "Right Samādhi": With object of consciousness in the manner of Heruka.

Indeed, the Buddhist genesis story is very ancient, being found in the Pali scriptures besides the northern Buddhist accounts. It is mentioned in all three branches of Buddhist scriptures, Sūtra, Vinaya and Abhidharma. A Sanskrit version entitled Rajavaṁsa (royal lineage) exists in the Mahāvastu. In the Abhidharma literature the account is given in the description of vivarta (differentiation of the beings due to evolution of the inferior worlds) as contrasted with samvarta (consubstantiation of the beings due to dissolution of the inferior worlds). At least in late Buddhist accounts, the legend does not have the importance that the Biblical Genesis has in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Our treatment suggests that in the earliest Buddhism it may well have had a much greater importance than it had later on. [7]

In any case, Tson-kha-pa (1357-1419 AD), founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism signals the importance of the legend in an elaborate discussion utilizing both non-Tantric and Tantric sources in the first part of his work Dpalgsanbahduspahignadkyi don gsalba, "Elucidating the meaning of the essential points of the Sri-guhyasamaja (Tantra)" (Lhasa ed, collected works, Vol. Cha) , which has the abbreviated reference Don gsal. Tson-kha-pa uses this legend as a rationale for the types of meditations found in the Anuttara-yoga-tantra, a literature which often mystifies and repels Western scholars because of its complicated ritualism and sexual symbolism. Here there is space for only the main ideas of Tson-kha-pa's discussion.[8]

The non-Tantric Buddhist legend may be organized and summarized as follows:

There are three efficient causes of the periodical destruction of the world systems, viz., fire, water and wind. According to the Abhidharmakoṣa (III, 100c-d, and commentary), fire brings an econ of evolution to an end by destroying all of the realm of desire (kama-dhatu) and the First Dhyāna Heaven of the realm of form (rupa-dhatu). Water destroys all that as well as the Second Dhyāna Heaven; and wind destroys all the later as well as the Third Dhyāna Heaven of the realm of form. Only the Fourth Dhyāna of this realism remains intact The First Dhyāna is also referred to by its divine residents, such as the Brahmā retinue deities, the Second Dhyāna by its chief deities, the Abhaśvaras, the Third Dhyāna by the Subha deities.

I. In the next period of evolution, while the lower receptacle worlds are re-evolving, the sentient beings fall to lower planes in a process usually described aś starting from the level of the Abhasvara deity class (after the destruction by fire). They fall from that divine world and come "here". "Here" is explained as Jambūdvīpa (our world continent or specifically India). Buddhaghośa of the southern school and Vasubandhu of the northern school of Buddhism agree that these "men of the first eon" pass through each of the intermediate worlds by a type of birth called "transformation" (upapaduka)[9] after each successive death. The Abhidharmakoṣa (II, 9b-c) says that the beings with this type of birth are the hell beings, the beings of the intermediate state, and the gods. Hence the "men of the first eon" were in a condition rather comparable to the present (disembodied) intermediate state (antarabhava) between death and rebirth. Asanga explains that these "men of the first eon" (*prathamakalpa*) passed through these superior, chief best (parama, agrya, śreṣṭha) and whose fruitions are experienced immediately, not at another time. And these men have a beautiful form (rupin) and are "made of mind" (manomaya). [10] In addition, the Mahāvastu (I, 339) says that these men are self-luminous, feed on joy, and go where they wish.

II. Then on the surface of the earth which at that time was in a fluidic

In assessing Greek transmissions to India, these need not be attributed to Greeks alone, because around the beginning of the Christian era many Graeco-Roman ideas circulated in Central Asia and were carried by miscellaneous peoples. One conclusion is reasonable: that Buddhism was more influenced by such foreign ideas than was Hinduism. This is obvious in the iconographic art types, especially the form of the Buddha image in Gandhara. It has long been held that foreign elements have entered into the formation of certain Buddhist Mahāyāna scriptures, especially those centered around the Buddha Amitabha (of boundless light). It is therefore reasonable that Graeco-Roman concepts should have entered more into the Buddhist Tantras than into Hindu ones, whether Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava, that is if we agree further that the Buddhist Tantras came into being sufficiently close to the time of Greeco-Roman prestige to adopt certain foreign modes of thinking where their usefulness was apparent and at that time perhaps commonplace; their origins forgotten. [11]

The literary history of these Tantras and their forerunning literature might well run this way in order to account for inclusion of any Greco-Roman concepts: After the old Upanisads just before and around the time of the Buddha, there gradually arose the type of work now called the sectarian Yoga Upaniṣad, the bulk of which is composed during the "Hindu revival" after the Maurya Dynasty downfall and down to the rise of the Gupta era. These sectarian Upanisads were being written by the Hindus when many foreign ides were circulating in North-West India from about 100 BC to 200 AD, but this does not mean that such Upanisads were influenced by such foreign ideas. However, profane science appears have been so influenced, because this period two systems of Roman astronomy were circulated in India to be later included in the Pancasiddhantika or Varahamihira. Also there were esoteric cults borrowing freely from different sources, Buddhist, Hindu and foreign elements. The eclectic character of such movements helped to bring in certain far-out ides that neither orthodox Hinduism nor orthodox Buddhism could be expected to entertain. At this time the word "Tantra" may not yet have been applied to such cults. Also at the university center of Taxila in far North-West India there was ample opportunity to learn various Graeco-Roman concepts; and also, for that matter, for some typically Indian ideas to be transported to the West or to enter into the religious syncretism of Central Asia.

In the early Gupta period there was a vast amount of collecting and rewriting of old legends, as well as the composition of formal treatises, political, philosophical and so son required by the new age which had turned to written down religious texts beginning to complete with the memorized tradition. This remarkable outpouring of new works would make the fourth and fifth centuries the Golden Age, determining the form of Hinduism even up to modern times. These two centuries were also the creative age for the Buddhist Tantras, determining their pattern of rite and doctrine for subsequent centuries. Not only the Guhyasamaja but also the other "revealed Tantras" were composed mainly at that time, and by this we do not preclude the later addition of chapters as happened to the *Majuśrī-mūlakalpa* or an expanded recession as apparently occurred to the *Jṅānavajrasamuccaya*. In the eighth century tantrism entered a new phase with the emergence of the Siddhas or tantric masters and the beginning of tantric rationalization, that is the enterprise of commentary by the tantric pundits, who tried to explain all sorts of obscure points in those "revealed texts."

References

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7. Alex Wayman, Buddhist Genesis and the Tantric Tradition, article in oriensExtremus 9.1 (1962).
8. Alex Wayman Buddhist Tantras light or Indo Tibetan Eso-Tericism Delhi 1990, p.25.
9. This is one of the four kinds of birth in Buddhism. Beings are also "born from a womb" (jarāyu-ja), "born from an egg" (aṇḍa-ja), "born from moist heat" (samsveda-ja).
10. V. Bhattacharya, editor, The Yogacārabhūmi of AcaryaAsanga, part I (Calcutta, 1957), pp. 41-42.
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Chapter 6

TANTRISM – EARLY MEDIEVAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS

The Tantras served an important social purpose by prescribing rituals and remedies not only for day-to-day diseases but also for snake and insect – bites, and injuries believed to be caused by ghosts. Remedies were recommended for the protection of cereals from mice and vermin. Tantric rites and occult practices were supposed to avert the adverse effects of the planets, poison and diseases, and the administration of antidotes was to be accompanied by incantations. The medieval tantrika was also physician and astrologer (jyotiṣī). [1] Tantric practices continue even now in Nepal and Mithilā, where the tantrika foretells the future and the dates of eclipses and festivals. The role of the tāntrika as physician and astrologer enabled him to serve the social and emotional requirements of the common people and provided the much needed social cohesion among people who belonged to diverse economic and sectarian groups.

Tantrism prescribed numerous magical rituals to achieve mukti (salvation) and bhukti (enjoyment) and to fulfill the various material desires (kamyani) of the people. A Vaisnavite tantric text of about the sixth century AD credits the tantra variety of siddhanta with the realization of the *caturvarga*[2] which obviously means dharma, artha, kāma and moksha. This was done either through pujā or through the cultivation of bhakti, the doctrine of complete surrender to both god and guru, who received various offerings. All this involved the creation of new pantheons in practically all the medieval sects which absorbed numerous folk deities. New divinities such as Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śakti were exalted and the old Vedic gods were relegated to subordinate positions. Tantrism was institutionalized by temples which housed the images of new divinities, by monastic organizations which gave paramount importance to the guru or āchārya, and finally by a vast corpus of written literature which embodied the various tantric traditions and practices. It was in effect identical with Hinduism in medieval times. Its outlook was highly secular and materialistic, and no other sect was so close to the life of the various classes of people as it was. This was perhaps the chief reason why it was popular for a long period in India, and has, in its essentials, survived to this day. Certain scholars like to stress the symbolical and philosophical aspects of tantrism, which would imply its restriction to a narrow circle of expert practitioners, but the contents of the published texts would show that large parts of them are concerned with rituals and practices connected with the day-to-day life of the people.

Weber ascribes the origin of tantrism to the greed of the brāhmaṇas which led them to offer their services for numerious folk deities for a fee. In his opinion they also did this out of a sense of competition with Jainism and Buddhism. However, there is no evidence to show that the brāhmaṇas were conscious of these motives in evolving the tantras. Through the materialistic motives of the brāhmaṇas may have played some role, by medieval times Jainism and Buddhism had become incapable of offering any serious challenge to Brahmanism. Some scholars attributes the origin of tantrism to psycho-sexual factors, and others explain its rise and growth in purely spiritual and mystic terms. But these analyses do not examine why this occurred in early medieval times in India. In my opinion the origin and development of tantrism can be tantrism can be better understood in terms of the economic and social factors of the period.

Indeed, a striking development of the early medieval period was the provision of land grants to priests and the building of temples on a large scale. D.D. Kosambi was the first scholar to stress the significance of religious land grants in opening new areas to cultivation and settlement. But their social and religious consequences remain unexamined. Land grants added a new dimension to the spread of mid Indian brāhmanical culture, which received a great stimulus from the Sātavāhanas in the Deccan. Large scale brahmanisation started in the age of the Guptas, whose empire, though not as large as that of the Mauryas, lasted for two centuries. By the time of the Guptas the brāhmaṇas were firmly entrenched in Madhyadeśa, from where they spread to the outlying regious. [3]

The Gupta princes and feudatories, who conquered new lands and people, badly needed religious and ideological support to consolidate their conquests. This could be provided primarily by the brāhmaṇas although other religious leaders were also helpful. Polygamous brāhmaṇas may have produced more children, whose longevity was increased by the growing knowledge of medicine in the early centuries of the Christian era. The laws of the partition of landed property which led to the break-up of large units and improverished individual brāhmaṇas are first found in Gupta times. Improved iron technology and agricultural techniques as well as advanced medical knowledge contributed to the growth to population in Madhyadeśa and in north Bengal where we have clear evidence of the pressure on land. The problem could be solved by migration to new lands of resourceful and knowledgeable people, such as the brāhmaṇas, who could induce a few enterprising artisans and peasants to join them.

The migration of the brāhmaṇas to the countryside was also caused the decline of towns. Depending on trade and commerce in the Śaka and Sātavāhana times in Madhyadeśa and the Deccan, during the ealry three centuries of the Christian era, were towns which supported the brāhmaṇas and other priestly people by gifts in cash. However, with the decline of trade, [4] this source of livelihood dried up and there began a movement back to the countryside. As shown earlier, the Kālī crisis also forced the brāhmaṇas to migrate and they continued the exodus for several centuries. In the tenth century, two brāhmaṇas from Pataliputra went to Nausari district in Gujarat for land.[5] Between the ninth and tenth centuries several brāhmaṇas migrated from the town of Tirabhukti to Orissa for the same reason[6] about the same time, brāhmaṇas from Ahicchatra and Śrāvastī[7] migrated to Orissa. In early medieval times, the brāhmaṇas left several towns in Malwa, Gujarat and Karnataka to enjoy land grants in the villages of Gujarat.[8] Apparently,, these urban centers were unable to provide a comfortable livelihood to members of the upper orders including the brāhmaṇas. Excavations attest to the difficult times that had fallen on Pataliputra, Tirabhukti (if it is identified with Vaiśālī), Ahicchatra and Śrāvastī. Hsuan-Tsang notes that Pataliputra was in a state of decay in the seventh century. Two other places, Kolanca and Tarakari, from where brāhamaṇas went to Bihar, Bengal and other places, may have been towns in decline in Uttar Pradesh. Similar may have been the case with post-Gupta Kauśāmbī, from which the descendants of the immigrant brāhmaṇas derive their title, Kauśāmbī. In fact, even limited archaeological excavations suggest the decay of town in the Ganga basin and the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh (such as Eran and Ujjain in post-Gupta times), which created problems of livelihood for the brāhmaṇas and others. [9]

The brāhmaṇas also migrated from towns situated outside Madhyadeśa. In the early medieval century, brāhmaṇas moved from several town to villages. From the middle of the eight century onwards we hear of the migration of several brāhmaṇas from Karhad[10] and from the beginning of the ninth century we learn of such movements from Vengi in Andhra Pradesh,[11] for obtaining land in the country side. It appears that these outlying towns had already been brahmanised, and the brāhmaṇas here may have belonged to the local stock. The distance between the original home of the beneficiary and the place to which he moved for acquiring lands may not have exceeded a hundred miles. In any case, the brāhmaṇas played a leading role in the agrarian expansion of the early medieval period.

The periodwise distribution of land charters indicates the advent of the brāhmaṇas in north Bengal in the fifth century, in east Bengal in the sixth century. Land donations to the brāhmaṇas in Gujarat become frequent under the Valabhi princes from the seventh century. Around that time they started receiving land in the Kangra area, Chamba and the Himalayan state of Nepal.

The brāhmaṇas took a long time to spread into Madhya Pradesh. Its northern fringes lay under Mauryan influence, and its western parts were exposed to the brāhmanical culture in the Śunga – Śaka- Sātavāhana period. The brāhmana dynasty of the Vākāṭakas made numerous land donations to the brāhmaṇas in Vidarbha, covering central and western Madhya Pradesh. The area between Painganga and Wardha was completely brāhmanised under these rules. [12] Their contemporatiesa and some Gupta vassals donated lands to the brāhmaṇas in northeastern Madhya Pradesh in the fourth and fifth centuries. But the southeastern part of this state, the area lying between the Mahānandī and Indrāvatī, was brahmanised for the first time between the sixth and seventh centuries under the Nala, Pāṇḍava and Sarabhapuriyā princes. [13]

Aśokan inscriptions indicate brāhmaṇa presence in Andhra and Karnataka in the third century B.C. Although Aśoka taught his people to respect the sramanas and brāhmaṇas, he did not grant then any land. The earliest epigraphic evidence appears in the first century BC in the upper Deccan with the Sātavāhanas, who claimed to be brāhmaṇas. The eastern portion of Andhra was brahmanised in the third and fourth centuries AD under the Ikṣvākus, Śalankāyanas and Viṣṇukuṇḍins, but the western portion was brahmanised from the fifth century onwards. The western part of Karnataka came under brāhmanical influence in the fifth and sixth centuries under the brāhmanical dynasty of the Kadambas, who had set up their rule in north and central Mysore. But it was under the Calukyas that brāhmaṇa settlements came to be distributed over the whole state between the sixth and eighth centuries.[14]

The large scale acculturation of the Tamil land began in the eighth century. Although they had their seat of power at Kāncī, the Pallavas looked mainly northward and granted land to the brāhmaṇas in the fourth century in the districts of Guntur, Nellore and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. They ruled over a part of Tamil Nadu, and the brāhmanical influence they generated in the Dravidian land did not spread beyond the coastal area around the modern city of Chennai. Even now, brahamical influence is more noticeable in the coastal areas of Andhra and Tamil Nadu than in the interior. The brāhmaṇas were introduced into Tamil Nadu in large numbers by the Colas from the eighth century and as land grants show, their settlements increased considerably in the ninth and tenth centuries.[15]

Although Śaṇkarācārya is placed in AD 788-820, land grants do not show large sclebrahmanical settlements in Kerala until the tenth to eleventh centuries. In the Cola dominions, the existence of numerous villages dominated by brāhmaṇas is shown by inscriptions, and corroborated by the Saṁhitās belonging to both the Vaikhanāsā and Pancarātra schools of Vaiṣṇavism.[16] Generally the Pancarātra texts contain chapters on the foundation of the village. The Vaikhanasiya Kaśyapa Saṃhitā asks the king to bestow on Vaiṣṇava brāhmanas, a prosperous village which possesses all the necessary resources including labourers (bhṛtyas) and is free from the depredations of robbers and hostile elements.[17] The village is defined in this text as a habitation of the vipras and their bhrtyas,[18] it is also called the agrahara of the chief vipras.[19] The Pancaratra Parama Saṃhitā supports this and calls the habitation of the Kshatriyas pura, and that of the viaśyas pattana.[20] The next mentions neither the sudras nor the bhṛtyas of the brāhmaṇas, both of whom are taken for granted. In any case, these texts suggest that only the brāhmaṇas can found villages, a proposition different from the one laid down in the janapadaniveśa of Kauṭilya, who assigns the pioneering role in founding new settlements to the prince., Generally, the Pancarātra texts contain chapters on the foundation of the village,[21] which is a necessary precondition for the construction of the temple. They prescribe certain preliminary measures, [22] which show that the establishment of shrines and temples has to be preceded by colonization and the introduction of new methods of cultivation.

A geographical survey of land grants would show that, except in the deep south where brāhmaṇa settlements appear in large numbers from the eighth century onwards, it was in the fifth to seventh centuries that large scale land grants were made to the brāhmaṇas in the peripheral areas such as Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central and south India. The Himalayan areas and Nepal were also opened to the brāhmaṇas in post-Gupta times through land grants.[23]

Contemporary archaeology cannot give us a clear picture of the material and social life of the areas colonized by the brāhmaṇas in Gupta and post-Gupta times. But undoubtedly these regions were inhabited, though thinly, and some of them even had a sprinkling of brāhmanical population. Fresh settlement of landed brāhmaṇas raised problems of economic, social and religious adjustment between the old and the new inhabitants. Economically, the aboriginal people gained from the advanced agricultural knowledge of the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries. But the brāhmaṇas brought in private rights in land which reduced the tribal people to the position of temporary tenants and agricultural labourers attached to the soil, giving rise to a form of serfdom. The beneficiaries, though backed by royal force, did not have to depend on royal agents for the collection of their dues from the new peasants. They had to develop their own patterns of economic and social relations with the people.

Socially, a place had to be found for the tribal chiefs and the new landed classes who were not always brāhmaṇas. Hence, early medieval law books and texts on architecture modify the old rigid hierarchy based on the varna system in fovour of the one based on landed possession and military position. It was not, however, difficult to accommodate the large number of ordinary tribal people who were incorporated as sudras in eastern, central and southern India and also in the Himalayan tracts. In fact, the process had begun much earlier, and Manu's list (fifth century) of mixed castes contains more names of local tribes than of foreign peoples absorbed into Indian society. The multiplication of the castes continued apace and reached its climax in medieval times.[24]

The large scale accession of ht tribal people with their matriarchal traditions and family customs led to the insertion of new provisions in the marriage laws of the Dharmaśāstras.

Unapproved forms of marriage, which originated a couple of centuries before Christ, certainly recognized a few matrilineal customs. The Sātavāhana inscriptions indicate matrilineal practices even in the ruling brāhmaṇa families of the Deccan, and early medieval Sanskrit epigraphs from Orissa, the Deccan and Gujarat clearly recognize the high place of women at various levels of administration. The early medieval law books permit widow marriage under certain conditions and enlarge the scope of stridhana. All these changes in the position of women seem to have been the result of the influx of tribal people into the brāhmanical system.

The religious consequences of the interaction between the brāhmaṇas and the aborigines in the areas outside Madhyadeśa, which was the land par excellence of the brāhmaṇas and the model for the Hundu way of life, are intimately, connected with the economic and social results of the land grants. The brāhmaṇa immigrants in the east, west and south boast of their original home in mid-India. In the new areas they had to deal with people of diverse cultures. In Bengal, Orissa, central India and the Deccan, for instance, the brāhmaṇas came into close contact with the Śabaras, who are mentioned in early medieval inscriptions and still inhabit parts of Orissa and the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. Brāhmanical cultural connections with the Śabaras are indicated by the name Śabara Svāmī. It is significant that Śabara Svāmī was used by a famous Sanskrit commentator of the fourth century. Perhaps in deference to the communal land rights of the Śabaras, he asserted that the people along with the king possess joint rights in the land. Brāhmanical contact with the Pulindas of Madhya Pradesh can be inferred from a sixth century land grant, which mentions a land donor called Pulindabhata; he may have been a tribal improvised into a brāhmaṇa or a kshatriya. We hear of a chief called Pulinḍarāja, who prevailed upon a Bhauma-Kāra ruler in Orissa (ninth century) to grant land for the maintenance of the Śaiva temple and Śaiva asceties.[25]

The penetration of brāhmaṇas into the tribal belts added enormously to the number of sudra. Since the tribal people were given a low social rank, some spiritual compensation was considered necessary. According to brāhmanical rules they could not undergo the upanayana (initiation) ceremony, perform sacrifices or recite the Vedic mantras. This religious situation had developed in Madhyadeśa where the sudras mostly served as slaves, domestics, artisans and agricultural labourers. But agrarian expansion in the early Middle Ages under the aegis of the brāhmaṇas was accomplished through the efforts o the local people who were recruited as śūdras. For the first time, sudras as a community, are mentioned as cultivators by Hsuan Tsang and by the law commentator, Asahaya, in the seventh century. As cultivators they came to have some rights and interests in the land in which brāhmaṇa and other beneficiaries enjoyed superior rights. This became inconsistent with the traditional ritual status of the sudras which had to be raised by providing for their initiation in the tantric sects.

As regards the initiation of women, it is obvious that they enjoyed a higher status in the tribal belts where the cult of the mother goddess was widely prevalent. Since in the brāhmanical system they were bracketed with the sudras, it was only proper that change in the ritual status of the śūdras be accompanied by a change in the ritual status of women. The aborigines could be assimilated into Hindu society only by the recognition of their non-brāhmanical deities and rituals. The initial reaction of the brāhmaṇas to the tribal rituals was unfavourable. In the Kādambarī, Bāṇa speaks of the Śabaras as people who offer human flesh to Canḍikā and worship her with blood and the meat of animals. Since the author is amazed at these sites,[26] it appears that until the seventh century the Śabaras were not liked by the brāhmaṇas in the Vindhyas. But these rituals came to form an essential ingredient of tantrism, in which the mother goddess held an important position.

The cult of the mother goddess had long been prevalent in India, but by the sixth century it acquired an outstanding place in the literatue and other written traditions of the Buddhist and brāhmanical sects. The aboriginal mother goddess came to be worshipped in the form of Śakti in Hinduism and Tārā in Buddhism. Śāktism emerged as a religious factor in the sixth century and became a strong force from the ninth century onwards.[27]

The names of the mother goddess in different areas reveal their aboriginal origin. The HevajraTantra (also called Yoginī Tantra), a Buddhist work of about the eighth century[28] composed possibly in Bengal, mentions such goddesses an Vetālī, Casmārī, Śabarī, Caṇḍilī and Dombinī.[29] Parṇaśabarī, clothed in leaves, was the goddess of the Śabaraas who celebrated their festival savarotsava in Bengal.[30] In trantra texts Śiva is called[31] Śabara. The Gauḍavāho (vv. 285-347), a work of about the eighth century, identifies Vindhya – vāsini with Kālī or Pārvatī, and associates her with the Kols and Śabaras. [32] The Harivaṁśa (II. iii 7-8) an earlier text, adds that the goddess was worshipped by the Śabaras, Pulinḍas and Barbaras.[33] Śakti is known as Mātangī in an inscription from Madhya Pradesh, which shows that originally the goddess belonged to the Mātanga tribe. She is also called Caṇḍālī, which indicates that she was a goddess of the Caṇḍalas. The Kādambarī shows that the chief priest at the temple of the goddsss Caṇḍālī was a Dravidian.[34] Piṣṭapurikādevī, for whose worship Pulindabhaṭa donated two villages in eastern Madhya Pradesh in the sixth century[35] could originally have been a goddess of the Pulinḍas, and as the name suggests, may have provided the basis for one of th oldest pithas in the country. According to the KularnavaTantra, the goddess Śakti is represented by Caṇḍāli, Carmakārī, Magādhi, Pukkāsī, Svāṇa, Khaṭṭakī, Kaivartī, Vaiśyayositāḥ, Śāstra Jivi, Kaunciki, or Kaunḍukī, Saunḍiki, Ranjakī, Cayākī, Rajākī, Śilpī and Kauliki. Each is initiated in tantra, mantra, yoga and Mudrā, is a virgin and observes the samayacara (prevalent custom).[36] If these representations are not available, the Śakti may belong to any of the four varṇas.[37] Obviously, the list contains the names of mainly sudras and untouchables, several of whom are named after the tribes to which they originally belonged. According to Chintaharan Chakravarty, a later medieval manuscript lists twenty-seven Śakti deities headed by Kālī.[38] The names of Tārā, Bherunḍa, Vagalā, Tripurā and Cāmūnḍā in it[39] tare non-Sanskritic and may indicate their origin in non-brahmanised tribal areas.

The cult of the mother goddess prevailed throughout the country in early medieval times, but the religious geography as known from the Purāṇas and other sources shows that Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa and Bihar were the strongholds of eh Śāktas. This is significant because these areas were not adequately brahmanised till the sixth century, even in Bihar, Anga, Mithilā and portions of Magadha were not the strongholds of the brāhmaṇas.

On account of their north Indian parentage, the Purāṇas did not give much attention to central and south India, where the cult of the mother goddess was strong among the non-brāhmanical people. The old matrilineal tribal belt has shrunk over the centuries, but even now it includes a large part of Assam and south India. According to D.R. Ehranfels, more than a hundred matriarchal tribes and castes are found in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.[40] To this may be added small pockets in the tribal zone covering the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh, south Bihar and the neighboring areas of Orissa and West Bengal. Thus, the present distribution of matrilineal people supports the aboriginal origins of the cult of the mother goddess.[41]

The shrines of the mother goddess may have existed from a much earlier date, but they were accorded a regular place in the expanding all pervadingbrahmanical tradition only from the sixth century onwards.

None of the existing pithas or temples of the mother goddess are earlier than the sixth century. Several piṭhas of the mother goddess in Andhra were founded in early medieval items. At Tirupatī, the temple of Padmāvatī, which has tantric associations, was established sometime before the eighth century. The famous Vaiṣṇavite Bālājī temple of Tirupati was also constructed at about the same time. What is further noteworthy is that almost all the temples of the sixty four Yoginīs, manifesting the mother goddess in 64 forms, are found in the tribal belt of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. There is one temple in Bheraghat near Jabalpur and another in Khajuraho; the beginnings of both temples are traceable to the ninth century. One of these temples is found near Sambalpur at Rampur in the former Patna (Bolangi) state in Orissa, another in Kālāhāṇḍi (also in Orissa)[42] and yet another in Lalitpur district, uttar Pradesh.[43] Apparently, these temples were built in early medieval times under Hindu patronage to accommodate tribal goddesses.

Once the shrines of mother goddesses were established in the peripheral areas, attempts were made to legitimize them through Sanskrit texts, both Buddhist and brāhmanical. The Kubjikamata Tantra, copied between the sixth and seventh centuries, according to H.P. Sastri,[44] enumerates five pithas: Odiyana in Orissa, Jala in Jalandhar in Punjab, Purāṇa in Śrīśailam in Andhra, and Kamakhyā in Assam.[45] The HevajraTantra mentions only four holy pīṭhas, which can be identified with Jalandhar, Oddiyana (in the Swat valley), Paurṇagiri and Kamarupa[46]

According to R P Chandra it quotes several passages from medieval texts to show that the Pancarātra was considered un-Vedic by the orthodox.[47] The Śāmba Purāṇa states that the husband of Lakṣmī promulgated the tantra called Pancarātra, Bhāgavata or Vaikhanāsā for those who have strayed from the Veda. The Kūrma Purāṇa, a work of about the tenth century, states that Satvata Aṁsu, who was devoted to Viṣṇu, propagated a śāstra among the so called bastards and low-class people.[48] It adds that Viṣṇu and Śiva promulgated misleding systems such as Kapāla, Laguḍa, Vāma, Bhairava – eastern and western – Pancarātra, Paśupata and a thousand others.[49] The brāhmanical device of condemning the tribal people as mixed castes and inventing fictitious origins for them is familiar. Even when tribal goddesses were adopted into brāhmanical society, they continued to carry the stigmas of their origin. Thus, the Jayadrathāyamālā, a work of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries,[50] states that in order to worship Parameśvarī (Kālī) it was necessary to go to the houses of oilmen and potters and then worship the goddess in their company.[51] Textual references clearly show that in the initial stage, tantric literature was composed and systematized to serve the needs of the tribals and lower class Hindus and similar other peoples who had to be brought into and retained within the fold of Hinduism. Some tantric works originally existed in dialects spoken by the common people. This seems to have been the case with the HevajraTantra. When it was roughly sanskritised, it showed serious defects in scansion because it was initially composed in the dialect.[52] The practice of composing such texts for propagation among the common people continued until the nineteenth century. The Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa predicts that Queen Victoria would rule over India. Similarly, the Merutantra, a work composed in Bengal, speaks of the advent of the English people from London.[52] Curiously enough, now some Englishmen seek solace in Indian tantric mysticism and symbolism being disgusted with the materialistic outlook of their capitalist culture.

P. C. Bagchi, relying on a medieval passage, concludes that the oldest brahmanicaltantras originated in Āryāvarta or northern India.[54] According to this passage the countries of Kāmarupa, Kasmira, Kalinga, Koṅkaṇa, Kānci, Kośala and Kāverī-rāṣṭra, all beginning with Kara unfit for the worship of Śiva (śivasādhanā) on account of their physical deformities.[55] This may be regarded as an attempt to connect later developments in Hinduism with Vedicism or with its original home, Āryāvarta. But Bagchi's view cannot be accepted. The crucial passage occurs in the Pingalamata the oldest manuscript of which, available in Nepal, is called AD 1174.[56] This text itself is a supplement to the Brahmayamālā, which is a late composition. The Brahmayamālā is conspicuously absent in the list of eighteen tantratexts enumerated in the Niṣvāsatanatra Saṁhitā,[57] which is one of the earliest tantric texts preserved in the Nepal Darbar Library written in the Gupta script of the eighth century AD.[58] During the four centuries that separate the earliest systematic tantra work from the Brahmayamālā, tantra literature proliferated, and some authors sought sanction for this system by manufacturing a respectable provenance and spiritual genealogy in the same manner as the brāhmaṇas did for many princes by tracking their descent from solar and lunar dynasties from the seventh to eighth centuries onwards. Even then, reality could not be obscured; in medieval times we also hear of tantric expert hailing from Gauda, south India and other outlying areas. In Kathmandu from the Middle Ages onwards the priests of the Pasupatinātha temple continued to be recruited from among south Indian bahmanas [59]

From Nepal, tantric texts, especially Buddhist, may have been taken to Tibet and China. Amoghavajra, a monk of north India and a brāhmaṇa, lived in China between AD 764 and 771, and translated 77 works including several tantras.[60]AtisaDipankara had acquired proficiency in the four classes of tantras, and Pạdmasambhava of Udiyana looked after the tant4ic part of the Buddhist liturgy.[61]

The Buddhist Mantrāyana based on the tantras is said to have originated in the sixth century.[62] The earliest Buddhist tantric texts, the *Guhyasamāja, Vajraśikhara, Sarvatathāgatatattvasamāja* and *Mahāvairocana*, are attributed to the sixth and seventh centuries and because of their traditional association with Nāgārjuna, Nagabodhi and the south, are assigned to Andhra or Kalinga. [63]

In India, the Buddhist tantras first acquired a strong footing in Bengal in the sixth and seventh centuries. They seem to have been handed down in the most secret manner up to the time of Dharmākiṛti (AD 600-615). [64] But it was only between the eighth and twelfth centuries, possibly in the later half,[65] that various branches of tantra were introduced by the Siddhas called Saraha, Luipa, Kambala, Padmavajra, Kṛṣṇācārya, Lalitavajra, Gambhiravajra and Pīto.[66] With respect to tantrism, especially Sāktism, Mithilā and north and eastern Bengal constituted one religious unit in the middle Ages. Manuscripts of the Kālarnava Tantra have been recovered from north and east Bengal, and the Kaula practices survive in Mithilā even today. The nine Nathas are thought to be the authors of the Kaulatantras. A manuscript copy of the mahākaulajñāna vinirṇaya, taken to Nepal by Matsyendranatha, is similar to the transitional Gupta script as found in the Cambridge University Library manuscript of the Paramcśvarī Tantra, copied in AD 859. The work is referred to as Candraḍvipavinirgata, which means that it is from Candradvipa in Bakarganj in East Bengal. [67]

General tantric texts in Sanskrit transliterate in the Oriya script belong to medieval Orissa, [68] and on the basis of instructiọns given in the *Kaulacuḍāmaṇi* regarding erotic sculptures and in the Varāhī Tantra about the image of the Matsya Varāhī, these two texts seem to have existed in the ninth and tenth centuries.[69]

Tantric literature flourished in Kashmir from the tenth century, for tantrism was not introduced there until the eighth century. [70] The most famous author was Abhinavagupta, whose family had migrated from Kānyakubja to Kashmir in the eighth century where it was granted a big jagir. [71] He wrote a comprehensive treatise called the Tantraloka which systematically presents the teachings of the Kula and Trika systems. He seems to have been very much influenced by his teacher Sambhunātha, from whom he learnt the Kaulika texts and rituals at Jalandahar. [72] A few Tantric texts under Jain influence were compiled in Gujarat, Maharastra and Karnataka during the early medieval period. The *Samaraicchakahā* by Haribhadra Suri written in Gujarat around the eighth century is technically not a tantric work, but is saturated with tantric ideas and practices. The Jvalini Kalpa by Indramani was completed in AD 939 at Manyakheta, although the cult was started earlier by a tantric teacher of the Dravida monastic sect in the Chamrajnagartaluk of Mysore district.[73] Similarly, the Bhairava Padmāvatī Kalpa, another tantric text, was compiled in Karnataka by a Jain monk in AḌ 1047. [74]

In addition to these Jain tantric texts, twenty eight Āgamas, both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite, were composed in south India in early medieval times, especially after the eighth century, and were used by the followers of the tantric texts to construct temples, install images and conduct worship. The Śaiva Āgamas are mentioned in an inscription of the Pallava king Rajasimhavarman, who belonged to the sixth century. [75] But they really developed in the Tamil land and between the eight and eleventh centuries. According to T. GopinathRao, the Uttara-Karaṇāgama of the Śaivas refers to an event of the Seventh century, although with some other Śaiva Āgamas it prescribes the recitation of some Dravida Vedas or hymns composed by a few Śiva poets, the last of whom belonged to eh ninth century. [76] The Kashmir Śaiva poets of the ninth to tenth centuries refer to the Tamil Śaiva poet's works of the same period.[77]

Of the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas, popularly known as the Saṃhitās, the prose version of the Vaikhanāsā Āgama seems to be the oldest.[78] Its metrical version ordains that the Dravida Vedas, the Prabandhas of the Srivaiṣṇavas or Alvars (eighth to ninth century), should be sung in front of divine procession.[79] Some Pancarātra texts such as the Ahirbudhnya, Jayakhva and Sattvata were composed earlier, probably in northern and western India, but they circulated mainly in south India.[80] The Vaiṣṇavite tantrics followed either the Vaikhanāsā (tāmasika) or the Pancarātra (sāttvika) system of worship or a combination of both in the Vaiṣṇava temples of Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Each system developed its own Saṃhitās, whose manuscripts have been recovered from south India, though only a few have been published.

There is a striking coincidence between the composition of the Āgamas and land grants in the Tamil land. According to T. Gopinath Rao, the Āgamas are not earlier than the ninth century, and inscriptions show that large scale land grants to Brāhmaṇas and Temples began in eighth century.

Thus it is deserved that early tantric texts are found chiefly in Kashmir, Nepal, Bengal, Assam and in western and southern Indian although their number in Mithilā is not inconsiderable. It may be argued that ecological and political factors explain their preservation in these areas where they first appear in early medieval time. [81] Though these factors may apply to Nepal and Kashmir, the tantras continued to be composed in all the regions mentioned above down to the eighteenth century and even later. In late medieval times most authors belonged to Bengal, quite a few to Maharashtra and south India, some to Orissa, Kashmir, Kumaon and Nepal, but the number of the those who belonged to Varanasi was extremely limited. [82] We may add that tantric survivals are more noticeable in the peripheral areas than in Āryāvarta of Madhyadeśa, which was the heart of Brāhmanism. On account of the conversions of the majority of people of northwestern India (now Pakistan) to Islam, tantric practices have become unimportant in that area, but this is not true of the neighboring Himalayan areas in eastern Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Of the 108 pithas mentioned in late medieval works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, those which can be identified lie mostly outside Madhyadeśa. Survivals of tantric practices in north Bihar may be attributed to its proximity to Nepal and north Bengal and to the intensely conservative character of the Maithil pundits. Hence, texts and practices survive precisely in the regions where they originated. [83]

Therefore, the problem of the origin of tantrism can be viewed from different angles: acculturation of the peripheral areas through land grants to brāhmaṇas, the aboriginal background of eh various types of mother goddesses, the antiquity and distribution of the pithas, the association of the Śabaras and other tribes with the different tantras, the dates and province of tantric texts and finally the modern survivals of tantrism. All these consideration lead to the single conclusion that the religion originated in the outer circle and not in Madhyadeśa. Of course, a few Western scholars, [84] look for non-Indian culture, but we do not find any concrete basis for such a hypothesis.

The institutional aspect of tantrism both at the human and divine levels developed as an integral part of the early medieval economic and social system. The tantric mathas, temples and teaches were supported by land grants, which in general created a kind of feudal system.[85] The tantric monastic organizations and divine pantheons were modeled after the social and administrative hierarchy that characterized the feudal system by the eighth century and later.

It is difficult to ascertain the causes of conflict between the Buddhist and brāhmanical tantric sects. The Jains and Buddhists did not accept the Vedas and their acceptance of tantrism did not make any difference. Theological debates could exacerbate feelings and strain relations, but economic causes may have intensified the hostility between the sects. The tantric Buddhists were getting richer at the cost of the Saivites and Vaisnavites. According to Chinese travelers one to two hundred villages were granted to the Nalanda monastery. [93] In earlier times, such grants were monopolized by the brāhmanical tantric sects. The danger to their livelihood from a new competitor may have infuriated them. In response to brāhmanical hostility, the tanric Buddhists tried to humiliate the deities. But the rivalry between various tantric sects was not so intense as to threaten the solidarity of the religious beneficiaries against the peasants.

We cannot think of tantrism without its rituals and occult practices, though it is not possible to discuss them in this study. Winternitz holds that the Tantras and the curious excrescences and degeneration of religion described in them are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or the Aryan immigrants, but they are the pseudo-scientific productions of the theologians. [86] But in view of the clear association of tantrism with aboriginal tribes, goddess and areas, it is difficult to deny the aboriginal contribution to its origin and growth.

Sexual intercourse is considered to be one of the worst rituals of tantrism, but anthropological studies of the tribal people in Indian and outside show that sexual rites formed an important part of their agricultural magic. These rites were believed to promote the fertility of the earth and prosperity of its people. Since agriculture was originally looked after, especially at the stage of horticulture, by women, such rites originated and developed exclusively in their hands.

The Vedic and post-Vedic people came into contact with the aboriginals through conquest and colonization in northern India. Why did this not give rise to tantrismearlier. This was because, in the initial stage, there was nothing like a well-organized brāhmanical culture, and the Ganga basin was sparsely populated before the large-scale use of iron tools. Further, earlier contacts between the Vedic and the indigenous population either took the form of the destruction of the vanquished or consisted in collecting taxed and tributes by force from them and distributing them among the priests and warriors. But, since the beginning of the Christian era, priests came to be provided with land revenues or lands in the conquered areas whose management made it necessary for them to live permanently in the aboriginal tracts. By Gupta times, private rights in land were established, so the brāhmaṇas permanently held on to their possessions. This developed into lasting long-term relations between them and the tribals, whose contribution as artisans, peasants and agriculturallaborers had to be firmly ensured. This also applied to the proselytizing Buddhists and Jains whose monastic foundations were supported by alnd grants. Furhter, the areas in which Vedic and even post-Vedic culture flourished was not very extensive. The first occasion for the social integration of India was provided by the Mauryas who were semi-brāhmanised and did not rule for more than a century. They extended the use of coins, iron technology, Northern Black Polished Ware, stone masonry and scripts rather than the brāhmanical culture. The social and religious problems created by the large-scale contact between the advanced people of the Ganga basin and those living beyond it had to be solved in Gupta and later times, and the answer was provided by the introduction of serfdom, the proliferation of castes, the growth of bhakti and the emergence of tantrism.

Tantrism arose in response to the social and economic needs of early medieval times. It exercised a wide social appeal. On the one hand it recognized the existing social and feudal hierarchy. Therefore, it was acceptable to all sections of people.[87] Tantrism represents a religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration rather than the accentuation of social conflict. Even the Buddhist sambha did not admit slaves and debtors, but the tantric circle (cakra) was open to all sections of people irrespective of varna, sex and other considerations. It was an assertion and acceptance of the culture of the outsider.[88]

Indeed, the modern people accept as Tantrism essentially means organistrites involving addition of five makāras, matsya (fish) māṃsa, (meat), Madya (Alcohal), maithuna (sex) and Mudrā (physical gestures) but even a cursory examination of early tantric literature and iconography and the survival of Tantric practices would show that it possessed many other important elements. It attached great importance to the cult of the mother goddess in written texts and in iconography. Although Tantrism belongs mainly to the Śākta sect it is also partly well pronounced in the Śaiva Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jain sects.

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46. Ibid., 1 VII 12; D.C. Sircar, The Śakti Cult and Tārā, pp. 12-13. There is some controversy about the identification of Oddiyana.
47. This hypothesis, however, needs more evidence than we have at present.
48. ChintaharanChakravarty, The Tantras, pp. 27-28.
49. R.P. Chanda, The Indo-Aryan Races, pp. 99-101.
50. Ibid p. 100.
51. H.P. Sastri, Catalogue of Palm-Leaf and Paper MSs 1, p. 176.
52. The Ḥevajra Tantra, pt. 1, p.18.
53. *Inreja mavastnānca landrājaścānī bhāvinah* quoted in Chintaharan Chakravarty, The Tantras, p. 23, fn. 1.
54. P.C. Bagchi, 'On Some Tantric Texts', p. 768.
55. Ibid.
56. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 251.

57. Ibid. p. 252.
58. H.P. Sastri, Catalogue of Palm-Leaf and Paper MSs, 1, Preface, p. LXXVII.
59. P.C. Bagchi, Studies in the Tantras, pt., 1, pp. 17-19.
60. ChintaharanChakravarty, The Tantras, p. 21 fn 11.
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76. J.N. Farquhar, An Outline of Hindu Religious Literature, pp., 193-94.
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78. Ibid., p. 57.
79. M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, tr, R.C. Pandey (Hindi), Delhi and M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, p. 247, fns 1 and 2).
80. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 259.
81. This is based on ch. ix of Chintaharan Chakravarty, The Tantras.
82. B.S. Pooner and Hodgson hold such a view (Chintaharan Chakravarty, The Tantras, p. 47) James Needham suggests some connection between the erotic sensual element in Chinese ritualism and the tantric religion of India, on the basis of which J.N. Banerjee, Pauranic and Tantric Religion, p, 132.
83. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 261.
84. In the early seventh century, HsuanTsang speaks of the grant of a hundred villages to Nālandā; later on in the same century, I-tsing speaks of the grant of 200 villages in the same context.
85. M. Wintermitz, A History of Indian Literature, pt., II, p. 531.
86. D.C. Sircars (ed) The Śakti Cult and Tārā pp. 68-69.
87. R.S. Sharma, op.cit., p. 265.
88. Chintaharan Chakravarty, op. cit., p.48 and J.N. Banerjee, Paurāṇic and Tantric Religion p. 132-33.

57. Ibid., p. [illegible]
58. [illegible]
59. [illegible]
60. [illegible]
61. Ibid.
62. [illegible]
63. Ibid., p. [illegible]
64. [illegible]
65. [illegible]
66. [illegible]
67. [illegible]
68. [illegible]
69. [illegible]
70. [illegible]
71. Ibid., p. [illegible]
72. [illegible]
73. Ibid.
74. [illegible]
75. [illegible]
76. [illegible]
77. [illegible]
78. Ibid., p. [illegible]
79. [illegible]
80. [illegible]
81. [illegible]
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83. [illegible]
84. [illegible]
85. [illegible]
86. [illegible]
87. [illegible]
88. [illegible]

Chapter 7

TANTRICISM – EARLY HISTORY AND THEORETICAL CONCEPT

As Tantric texts are believed to be the repositories of transcendent revelation, their origin is said to be of non-human nature.[1] It is, therefore, difficult to find out from the Tantric text as to when a particular Tantric text was composed Tantras, as revelation, are recognized as scriptural authority concerning matters pertaining to Tantric ideology and praxis.[2] Even though it may be difficult to locate or indicate the specific period of composition of most of the Tantric texts, it is, however, certain that Tantric religiosity or spirituality, when compared with the Vedic one, is not very old, although its roots may go back to prehistory.[3] We must, in this context, make a distinction between "Tantric elements" and "Tantricism" as a full-fledged religious movement.[4] There are very many Tantric elements whose roots either go back to the pre-historical period of the Indus Civilization or may be located in the Vedic texts. But Tantricism as a specific and singular religious movement is not older than AD 300.[5]

Before we proceed further in our investigation with regard to the earliest Tantric elements, it is necessary to keep in mind that quite a number of scholars are of the opinion that Tantricism is not of Indian origin. This thesis is based upon the assumption that says that the heart or essence of Tantricicm consists in the worship of the Mother Goddess.[6] The scholar's who are of this view believe that the worship of the Goddess (devī, śakti) being non-Vedic in orientation, does not belong to the Indian ethos, and so must have come from outside India, H.P. Shastri, in this context, believes that the "Tantras come from outside India. Most probably it came with the Magipriests of the Scythians.[7] Bhattacharya, too, is of the opinion that the introduction of "Śakti-worship in religion is so un-Indian that we are constrained to admit it as external or foreign influence.[8]

The above theory concerning Tantricism as having come from outside India is given further push by pointing out that in some of the Tantras it is specially mentioned that certain left-hand practices were learnt by the Indians outside India. [9] The theory is based on a legend which says that sage Vaśiṣṭha, upon visiting Mangolia (mahācina), got to know certain secret left-hand (cīnācāra) practices. This story is told in one of the Tantric texts, namely, the Rudrāyamālā. [10] In this text we are told that Vaśiṣṭha performed penitential austerities for six thousand years in honour of the Goddess. Even upon practicing austerities, the Goddess did not manifest herself to him. Seeing failure around, Vaśiṣṭha approached his father, Brahmā, for such a mantra that would be efficacious and would result in the appearance of the Goddess. Instead of imparting a different mantra, Brahmā advised Vaśiṣṭha to continue the practice of austerities – and Vaśiṣṭha complied with this advice. However, this time also the Goddess did not manifest herself to the sage. This made the sage angry. The Goddess made herself available to him and advised him to go to Mangolia. Following the instructions of the Goddess, Vaśiṣṭha visited Mangolia where he learnt the secret left-hand practices. By following the left-hand path, the sage attained the state of liberation. This story is repeated in the Brahmayamālā.[11]

The above mythic story does not conclusively prove that Tantricism per se is not of Indian origin. What is probable, while keeping the content of the story in mind, is that three might have been certain such non-Indian influences that must have accelerated the development of the cult of the Goddess – and the cult might have derived much of its sustenance from countries that lie on the north-east and north-west of India.[12] However, we shall discuss this problem at an appropriate place in terms of finding out as to whether Tantricism is mainly constituted by the worship of the Goddess or whether the cult of the Goddess is of un-Indian origin.[13]

Tantricism in Prehistory

In order to locate the historical roots of Tantricism, we will have to analyses such Tantric elements that at least on the surface level, seem to have had their origin in prehistorically beliefs and cults. The prehistory elements that have become, over the passage of time, constitutive of Tantricism may not give direct and explicit evidence about specific Tantric practices. They do, however, give certain suggestions, if seen from a religio-cultic viewpoint, concerning the symbolic value of such Tantric practices that we know at present.

The most important Tantric element, which has a prehistory, is the cult of the Mother Goddess. The prehistory of the Goddess lies in the conception of the ancient concerning the Earth as being the Mother Earth (Terra Mater).[14] The conception that the Tantrikas have of the Goddess seems to have directly evolved out of the primeval Earth cult. The Earth as Mother is the most primeval religious institution. It is an institution characterized by such a consciousness in terms of which the pre-historical man looked at "the earth as the cosmic repository of all forms, latencies and power ..the fertile source of being."[15] This institution, in the beginning, many have expressed itself in terms of amorphous of loose consciousness, viz., without any concrete form or symbol. With the passage of time, this vague consciousness of eh Earth as being the Mother took on an anthropomorphic form, and expressed itself in the concept of womanhood. As woman is seen the source of life, so is the

Mother Earth. This homologisation of the Earth with womanhood is the most appropriate, spontaneous and natural way of looking at the transcendent reality as the source of life.

Once the Earth was bestowed with the identity of womanhood, and thereby the centre and source of life, it became easy to personify it as the Goddess. Accordingly the cult of the Goddess not only became a cultural reality, but also formed the basis of religious institution and experience, and thereby opened up, in the midst of life and death, a new spiritual vision before the ancients. Having been transformed into a religious reality, the Earth as the Mother Goddess has continued to function as the ultimate symbol of life and death. In the context of India, the Goddess has expressed herself through a multitude of cultic symbols. Having evolved out of the Earth, the Goddess has continued her association with the symbols of Nature, viz., of the Earth. Being closely associated with Nature, the Goddess is referred to as the Lady of the Forests, the Daughter of the Himalayas, etc. These attributes or epithets of the Goddess express her deep link with vegetation.[16]

The Earth as Mother is so inclusive that it includes into itself everything that is related to vegetation, which means that such aspects of vegetation are included into the womb of the Mother Earth as plants, trees, grass, etc. [17]It is the tree that forms the connecting link with water and vegetative symbols. The importance of the tree as a religious symbol is quite manifest from the Vedic times onwards.[18] The tree, as a religious symbol, expresses its sacred character through its identification with the invisible supermundane presence. In other words, it is believed that such supernatural forces that are invisible always inhabit a tree. Because of the presence of the forces of the divine order, the tree becomes the symbol of health, wealth, wellbeing, and fertility, etc. As an anthropomorphized symbol, the tree through propitiation and invocation rants the wishes to both men and women. [19] The association of the Goddess with the tree signifies that "the tree is an inexhaustible source of cosmic fertility.[20]

The consciousness of the Goddess seems to have arisen from a kind of religious intuition in which the Earth is seen as the source of life. As the source of life, the Earth as the Mother has been deified and divinized. It is this very idea that is one of the main doctrinal pillars of eh Tantric conception of the Goddess as a dynamic and creative power. As woman, the Goddess expresses as well as symbolizes this religious reality. It is interesting to note that in one of the most important texts (devoted to the Goddess), namely, the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa the Goddess is referred to as Devī Earth.[21]

It is difficult to say as to whether the archaeological findings of the Indus can be used as the source material for the origin of Tantricism. Whatever doubts we may entertain in this regard, it is of utmost importance to study the archaeological findings of the Indus so that some idea can be formed as to what kind of religion prevailed among the people of the Indus. Definite clues about the existence of the Mother Goddess may be located in the archaeological discoveries of eh Indus.[22] The discovery of some of the seals by Marshal and others have led to the conclusion that the cult of the Father God as well as of the Mother Goddess existed, in one form or the other, during the period of the Indus Civilization. The findings of some of the figurines in the Indus have a close religio-symbolic resemblance with the Tantric deities, particularly with such deities as Śiva and Śakti. Both these deities, although in different nomenclatures, play a very significant role in both the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism in terms of metaphysical conceptual polarity of man and female. The iconic as well as religio-symbolic resemblance with the Tantric deities has led the scholars to believe that some of the post-Vedic cults and ritual practices have their roots in the religion of the Indus. In other words, it is believed that some of the practices that we find in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism have their origin in the religion of th Indus.[23] There aer some scholars who, however, caution us against the tendency of tanking the genetic relationship between the Indus figurines and the post-Vedic cultic deities and practices of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism.[24]

Whatever be the facts, one thing however is certain, and that is that these figurines, being suggestive in their symbolic meaning and representation, are open to the possibility of reflecting and manifesting a religious experience akin to the one that Tantricism represents. The religious orientation of the seals demonstrates the possibility of the cult of the Goddess as well as of the male God. Both these iconic representations, as religious symbols, are very suggestive towards a Tantric interpretation.[25]

The close affiliation of the male and female principles, in the form phallus and vulva, symbolize and concretize the unification of the opposites. On the phenomenal level, the male and female principals represent two polarities which, on the transcendental level, have to be unified into a comprehensive singleness or unity. The Goddess is the symbol of dynamic power. She represents the phenomenalisation of the Absolute, whereas the male principles express transcendence. The Goddess is the revelation of that creative mystery which a woman symbolizes. The Goddess represents that experience of humanity whereby the power of sexuality is experienced as the centre and source of life. It is an experience in which the gods seem to have "returned their energies to the Primeval Śakti, the One Force, the fountainhead, whence originally all had stemmed.[26] The result of this experience is the discovery of the original state of the universal power as life and death.

The Indus Valley religious orientation seems to confirm such religio-cultural symbols that form part and parcel of Tantric ideology. In the figurines of the Indus Tantric ideology. In the figurines of the Indus Tantric symbols are quite visible. In Tantric ideology the symbols of phallus-vulva, water, etc. are represented in a developed form. It is therefore safe to guess that some of the Tantric elements may have their historical source in the religio-cultural history of the Indus.[27]

Tantricism in Vedic Tradition

The Vedic tradition, as documented in the text of the Ṛgveda[28] reflects the religio-cultural scenario of the Aryans upon settling in the Gangetic plains of India. The Aryan religious orientation was mainly constituted by a serious concern for the wellbeing "in this world and in the other world; consequently it is a decisively practical affair."[29] The Vedic thinking is not so much concerned with the theoretical aspects of religion a s much as with the practical aspects of life in the world. Leading a pastoral life, the concern of the Vedic

Aryans was with the problems of daily life. This concern for practicalities of life reflects itself with regard to the possession of cattle, health and wealth.

As the Vedic Aryan were practical in the affairs of life, so they were also practical insofar as religious life was concerned. This concern for practicality found its best expression, at the level of religiosity, in and through the ritualized offerings into the blazing flames of fire of sacrifice. The Vedic sacrifice-oriented rituals functioned as a medium for appropriating the realities for which the sacrifice was performed.[30] Through appropriation and assimilation the sacrifice was expected to yield the desired result, and thereby enable the performer of the sacrifice to surmount the obstacles or obstacles or difficulties that Nature may have given rise to. [31]

When it comes to the Tantric form of ritual, the case is not much different from the Vedic one. The Tantric ritual functions exactly in the same manner as the Vedic one. The aim of a Tantric ritual is to experience, through the process of homologisation, the transcendental reality in a concrete form. The Tantric ritual also concerns itself with the world of history, viz., it tries to realize the fruit or result for which the ritual has been performed.[32]

Sexuality, within the Vedic context, has not merely been treated in terms of physical orgasm or act. The meaning of the sexual act becomes meaningful if sexuality is interpreted in terms of ritual act. What actually happens is that the sexual act is transported, when ritualized, onto a different plane, which is the plane of the sacred. Since it is ritual that sacralises sexuality, so it is bound to happen that the ritual itself would be explained by making use of sexual symbol.[33]

In the chandogyopaniṣad[34] sexuality is so homologized as to terminate into a sacred Vedic chant. It is through the liturgical chant that sexuality is so sanctified as to eliminate all such traces from it that smell of debased profanity. Thus the sexual act is itself transformed into a sacramental act.

There are some important female deities in the Ṛgveda and these divinities, as it were constitute the beginning of Tantric history. In the Vedic texts they foreshadow their historical as well as religious importance. They function as transitional symbolic representations between Vedism and Tantriciam. Let us see what role some of the female deities have played within the Vedic religious framework.[35]

The first important Vedic goddess that comes to mind is the Mother Earth (Prithivī). She as the Earth is the Mother and is spoken of along with the sky god, namely, Dyaus.[36] The Earth is mother because she is "the extended one."[37] Although the Goddess may not have well defined character, yet she is not completely destitute of power.[38] The role of the Goddess Prithivī is so depicted as to enable her to function as a Mother, and thereby is prayed to be "kindly, full of dwellings and painless."[39] The dead are supposed to enter "into the kindly Mother Earth who will be wool-soft like a maiden."[40]

The Goddess Earth may not in the Ṛgveda be so depicted as to be all-powered, but she, however, is given due recognition in the Atharvaveda.[41] The text of the Atharvaveda seems to have been composed at such a juncture when the local customs of the aborigines had begun to be assimilated by the Aryans. As a result of this incorporation of non-Aryan practices the Goddess also was given her due role. Thus the all-inclusive Motherhood of the Earth is recognized because on earth subsist the "brown, ruddy and colored."[42] The Earth as one's Motherland is very much latent in the above understanding of Prithvi.[43] The Earth is Mother precisely because in it "lives (all) together without any overcrowding and mutual enmity. There is the picture of the happy humanity, living on earth on account of her grace as a loving Mother".[44]

Sarasvatī is the other Vedic Goddess who is associated with Brahmā,[45] and is said to be "the goddess of music, wisdom and knowledge, the mother of Vedas.[46] Being the "watery one," the goddess seems to have originally been associated with the river divinity. [47] The water rites or rituals may be located in this Goddess, and these rituals, through the process of internalization, are used in Trantricism as a means for purification.

The Non-Aryan Influences

The scholars, prior to the archaeological discoveries in the Indus, believed that the sole cultural bearers of the Indian subcontinent were the Aryans. This opinion, however, had to change itself radically in the light of the archaeological discoveries in the Indus. It is difficult to say as to who were the people that constituted this very advanced Indus culture. It is believed that, prior to the Aryan intrusion, such races as, for example, Dravidian or Munda constituted the religio-cultural life of Indian subcontinent. Upon their intrusion into the Indian subcontinent, the Aryans were bound to encounter the people of these races. Once this encounter gained momentum there was bound to occur certain degree of mixture and synthesis between the opposite cultures.[48] The influence of the non-Aryan races upon the Aryans is quite evident at the level of religious praxis. [49]

The earliest scholar who engaged himself in the task of finding out as to what kind of linguistic influences the Aryans had from the native sources was J. Pryzluski. His studies concerning the linguistic phenomenon of Kālā[50] has thrown much light on the religious background of the Goddess. He began his study with the intention of finding out as to "whether Kālā means Black god only and Kālī the Black goddess, or if these names allude to Time also, destroyer of everything are Kālā, black and Kālā, time, fate, and two different senses for the same word."[51]

Thus Tantricism has to be in the context of this synthesis, viz., it is an outcome of both Brahmanism and of non-Aryan cultures. Tantricism reflects the composite nature of Indian culture in terms of which it has come part of the ethos of the people. It is this mutual give and take that ultimately made Tantricism acceptable to the people of the Great Tradition. [52]

Tantricism

Tantricism as a religious search for meaning should be seen as the culmination of yogic experimentation with regard to mind-body complex. It is such a religious movement of assimilation and synthesis, within the broad parameters of Indian religious history, whose early beginnings are quite visible in the Vedas themselves. It would be quite erroneous to maintain that Tantricism merely represents a new form of Yoga or religious philosophy while having no links with the past. Both Yoga and philosophy, no doubt, play a very important role in Tantricism. But Tantricism, however, is much more than Yoga or philosophy. It is a specific kind of life-style or way of life. Tantricism as a definite way of life made its first appearance most probably during the beginning of our era. However, it transformed itself into a pan-Indian religious movement between AD 500 and 1200. Tantricism, as a specific religious movement, has been codified in the texts called Tantras or Āgamas. The Tantric texts that have come down to us have been written in such a way as would either be considered symbolic or ambiguous. It is the ambiguity of language that has bestowed the epithet upon the Tantric texts as being the container of what technically is called "twilight language" (sāndhya-bhāsā). It is a form of language that is difficult to understand on account of its ambiguity in meaning. They alone can decode the mysterious language of Tantras who have been initiated into the secret aspects of Tantricism by a competent Tantric teacher (guru).[53]

Being basically concerned with a structure of spirituality whose orientations are rooted in secrecy, Tantricism thereby makes its character explicit in terms of its concern with the methods of salvation than with philosophical or theological questions. Tantricism, thus, does not so much aim at establishing its own doctrinal or metaphysical system of thought as much as at making its methods of salvation efficacious. It is so because Tantricism has to be seen more as a religious movement with a specific kind of life-style. Although it dame in conflict with the existing doctrinal systems, yet the dividing line between Tantricism and the various other doctrinal systems has always remained fluid. The conflict, if it ever arose in relation to the non-Tantric religious practices, has always been marginal. In the case of Hinduism, we see at the very initial stage a clear-cut conflict between Brahmanism and Tantricism, but, at the level of religious parasix, there is a process of assimilation of each other's practices. Brāhmanism shows this spirit of assimilation in the adoption of such Tantric practices that suited it the most. Similarly Tantricism makes Brāhmanical doctrinal systems the basis of its spirituality. In the case of Buddhist Tantricism it is the Mahāyāna metaphysical framework that has provided the essential doctrinal framework for such Tantric schools as, for example, Vajrayāna or Tantrayāna. As Tantricism does not aim at propounding new metaphysical or doctrinal lines of thought, so it has accordingly confined itself to the task of making its practices more result-oriented and in terms of which could concretely be experienced those doctrinal principles that it has assimilated. What Tantricism, therefore, aims at is to devise such ways and means whereby could be realized mystically such fundamental doctrinal principles that it has assimilated either from Brahmanism or from Mahāyānism.[54] The ways and means that Tantricism has devised towards this goal are by and large of esoteric character, and it is this esotericism that really makes our subject very fascinating and interesting.

The method of appropriation in Tantricism should be analyzed particularly in the context of the cult of the Mother-Goddess. The Goddess is thought of as the guardian and protector of the life-sustaining fields that sustain life by producing food. In the manner the

Goddess sustains and preserves the lives of all creatures. The products of the Earth are not simply to be treated as a form of wealth. They, rather, manifest the transcendental sacrality of the Goddess. Thus the Goddess, as a symbol of the Divine, is understood as the basis of life. Seen in this role, it is essential to know the Goddess as creatrix. The knowledge of the Goddess as creatrix is possible by penetrating the secret processes of the Goddess – and this penetration is actualized through the enactment of such rituals that are seen to be causally efficacious. The penetration, through ritual, into the secret processes is achieved upon appropriating divinity of the Goddess. This vision of the Goddess is beautifully reflected in the famous Hymn to the Goddess. In the hymn the Goddess is projected as "the origin of all prosperity,"[55] "the giver of wealth and prosperity.[56] The Goddess as the source of sustaining food is well reflected in the Hymn of Annapurṇā. The name of the Goddess as Annapurṇā itself connotes "The one who is replete with food."

Meaning of Tantra

The term tantra, through its evolutionary phases, has incorporated into itself a variety of meanings. The term has been used, depending on the context, in a variety of ways, and therefore the meaning of the term too has been varied. Initially the term was used in a general way, as it did not have a specific technical meaning. The Vedic texts have made use of the term in the sense of a loom,[57] and Pāṇini,[58] the father of Sanskrit grammar, also has used the term in a similar sense. It seems that the term tantra, from the very beginning, has an organic relationship with the idea of weaving, loom and warp. On the basis of the idea of loom the grammarians derived the word from the root tan, which is said to mean "to extend", "to propagate, and so on. The term in the context of its root meaning, has been interpreted to mean "the scripture (s) by which knowledge is spread" (*tanyate visṭāryate jñānam anena iti tantram*).[59]

There are various other meanings associated with the term, in the light of the Mahābhāśya of Patanjali,[60] has been used in the sense of knowledge in general. Many branches of knowledge have, thus been designated by the term tantra, such as, Nyaya-tantreṣu, Sāṃkhya-tantreṣu, Cikitsā tantresu etc. It is in the context of such usage that Saṃkara, in his bhāṣya on the Brahmasūtra,[61] refers to the philosophical system of Sāṃkhya as tantra. The term has also been used to refer to a particular book or books, such as Pancatantra. Most of the writes, after Śaṃkara, have made use of the term in relation to a specialized branch of knowledge. Bhaskaracārya, a great Tantric scholar, spoke of the Mimāṃsa system of philosophy as the Jaimini-Tantra.[62]

The Tibetan term, *rgyud*, expresses the exact meaning as to what the term tantra signifies within the overall framework of Tantricism. The term signifies such "a ritual book (that is meant) for coercing deities and for other general magical ceremonies.[63] The term, from a technical standpoint, embodies such texts that deal with mantras,[64] secret initiations, mystical diagrams, yogic discipline,[65] etc. Tantricism, on the one hand, signifies certain methods and practices that have a ritualistic and meditative orientation and, on the other hand, it expresses a particular life-style, which in intent and content is antinomian and subversive. Although Tantricism differs radically from Vedism in its outlook and paxis, it however shares a common soteriological interest with Brāhmanism, which is the attainment of liberation (mukti) from the cycle of rebirths. As in Vedism, so in Tantricism the methods, practices and rituals are also used for the attainment of worldly goals (bhukti). Tantricism also signifies, though not exclusively, Śākta schools (sampradaya) in terms of succession (paramparā) of teachers. The teachings that the teachers have imparted are collectively called sādhanā, that is methods of spiritual exercise.[66]

Features of Tantricism

Basic of Tantricism is non-dualistic system of philosophy and such practices that, when viewed exteriorly, seem to be strange and bizarre. It believes in the sue of the magical diagrams (yantra), in ritualistic circles (manḍala), in the occult use of wine and flesh, in the psycho-physical discipline (yoga)[68] in astrology, in alchemy,[69] and so on.

It would be quite erroneous to assume that Tantricism has nothing better to offer than to engage in blizarre and outlandish practices. Tantricism is much more than what appears to us as strange. It has developed an affirmative outlook with regard to the world, and has affirmed decisively that the presence of the divine is not far away from us, but is within us. This thinking is based upon the understanding that the world we live in, and of which we are a part, is nothing but the emission of the Lord itself, which means that the world has come out of the Divine Womb. From this conceptual understanding is concluded that the world is permeated by the presence of the divine, and so should be treated as the embodiment of sacrality. It is on the basis of this thinking that Tantricism maintains that the macrocosm (Supreme Being) and microcosm (individual being) are identical and not different.[70]

Although Tantricism adheres strictly to a non-dualistic philosophical outlook, it however introduces a relative kind of dualism in order to explain as to how the phenomenalisation, in the form of objective world, of Supreme Being occurs. The theory of relative dualism is conceived in terms of the divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti. It is a doctrine that explains as to how the Supreme Being, at the relative level of understanding, parallels male-female polarity. At the practical level of religious praxis, Tantricism seeks the fusion of the two in terms of which the transcendental bliss (Mahā-sukha) is experienced. At the transcendental level the fusion of the male-female, Śiva-Śakti, terminates in the experience of the unity and oneness of being.

Śiva, as the embodiment of male principle, is viewed, at the transcendental level, as being of the nature of pure light of consciousness (prakasa), which in metaphysical terms is equated to pure Being. As light of consciousness, Śiva is passive, and so cannoteffect the emergence of the categories of existence. In order to insert creative urge within Being. Tantrikas thereby have spoken of Being as consisting of dynamism (vimarsā, spandana, Śakti). In its transcendent aspect Being is passive and pure light, whereas in its immanent aspect it is creative and dynamic. Both these aspects of Being have been so anthropomorphized as to equate them, at the relative level of understanding, to male-female polarity. Thus Being as male female polarity is known as the divine Couple or what popularly is called Śiva-Śakti dyad. Thus Śakti as creative power is coessential with being. The Absolute manifests itself as the world (idam) through the creative power called Śakti. AT the phenomenal level, the essential unity of Śiva and Śakti is shown in terms of the intimate embrace of the Divine Couple are intended to show that Śiva and Śakti as being essentially one, though representing two aspects – passive and active, male and female – of the One at the phenomenal level. Analogously speaking, the same yardstick is applied to man and woman. Both of them are essentially of single essence. Due to primordial ignorance, the unity of Being is not recognized or perceived or experience. To restore unity, Tantricism has devised an elaborate system of practical methods by the use of which the practitioner is expected to have the experience of the unity of Being within. The aim of these Tantric methods is to enable the adept to have the experience of the unity of being within the contrinuum of Becoming. If this is so, it would mean that ht essential nature of Being also is Becoming. It is a viewpoint that asserts that being, by reducing itself to Becoming, empties itself, figuratively speaking, of its Beingness. As the essential nature of Being is Becoming, so Śiva has no significance apart from Śakti.

Only when united with Śakti has Śiva the power to create, but without her God is unable even to stir. [71]

The Absolute that contain within itself the urge to manifest itself as the universe cannot be termed as being impersonal. Such an Absolute has to be personal. It is within this conceptual framework that the Tantikas think of the Absolute as possessing the powers of will (icchā), knowledge (jṅāna) and action (kriyā). On account of these absolute powers the Absolute is equated with absolute freedom (sarvasvatantryaśakti). The Absolute of Tantricism is unlike the passive Brāhmin of Advāita Vedānta. It is the Śakti aspect that reflects the absolute powers of the Absolute. Therefore, it is Śakti, the creative power of the Absolute, which is seen as the creatrix of the manifest world. In other words, it means that the Many, which are constitutive of the diversity of the manifest world, have come out of the One and shall return unto the One. Tantricism, however, would not like to be labeled either as a dualist or non-dualist.[72]

The Tantric spiritual praxis or Yoga is closely associated with some secret rituals. Though there are some Tantric teachers, like Sarha, who give no importance to ritual, yet Tantricism per se feels the need for rituals as a means of energizing the yogic practices. The process of Tantric praxis or Yoga is technically called sādhanā. The Tantric praxis, broadly speaking, has been classified into the right hand (daksinacara) and the left-hand (vāmācāra) practices. In the Tantric ritual, particularly of the left-hand variety, the use of five forbidden ingredients is essential – and the forbidden ingredients, also known as the Five Ms (panca-makāra), are as follows:

1. Madya – wine
2. Māṇsa – meat
3. Matsya – fish
4. Mudrā – fried beans or gesture
5. Maithuna – sexual intercourse

The adherents of the right-hand way (daksiṇacārī) make use of the Five Ms through symbolic substitution, whereas the left-hand adherents (vamacārī) make use of them in actuality. The aim of the first four ingredients is to prepare the practitioner (Sādhaka) for the sexual act, which is the last ingredient, by stimulating his senses. The performance of the sexual act is the culmination of the entire ritual process. The sexual intercourse, at the physical level, gives immense joy to both man and woman. By means of copulation the practitioner intends to make use of his sexuality as a means of break through or a facilitating factor for the attainment of transcendental bliss. It would, therefore, be erroneous to say that sexuality is used as a means of self-gratification or indulgence. Since the sexual act is used for transcendental purposes, so no debasement of sexuality as such is involved. The sexual act is used as a means for the experience of such a transcendental union whereby distinction of male and female is completely eliminated. Whether one follows the left-hand way or the right-hand way, the aim is to experience the transcendental bliss in terms of the unity of Being.

The antinomian character of Tantricism is reflected in its use of the Five Ms. Tantricism is completely opposed to such a kind of spirituality that believes that the stereological goal of salvation is reached through renunciation of the world. Instead of renunciation, Tantricism believes in the enjoyment of the sense pleasures. Having a positive attitude towards the sense pleasures, Tantricism thereby not only values the human body, but also sees it as a fit means of arriving at the transcendental joy that ensues upon experiencing the unity of Being within. For a Tantrika the human body is the container and receptor of all divine potencies. As such it is the best medium for realizing liberation in terms of the experience of the bliss of non-dual Being.

It will be of great importance at this point of discussion to analyze some of the main symbols that Tantricism upholds and values. Tantric symbols do not simply function as epistemological conduits. They are, rather, employed s methods or techniques for the appropriation of Being itself. It is because of this reason that much emphasis is laid upon the concrete forms of experience. It is the experience of realities; both manifest and unman fest that is of great importance to a Tantrika.

Although there is a lot of difference between Hindu and Buddhist Tantric imagery, there are, however, very many common elements that bind them to each other. One of the main orientations of Tantricism is the identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm.[73] In the Satcakraṇīrupaṇa,[74] a detailed account of this equation, viz., microcosm parallels macrocosm, is to be found. Tantric symbols are not merely as modes of realization; they are also the processes of interiorisation. Take, for example, the case of the mystical centers (cakra) in the body. It is believed that at the base of the spine is located the root-cakra (mulādhāra-cakra). In the middle of the centre is a yellow square, which represents the element earth (prithivī). Within the square is a triangle, representing the female aspect (Śakti) of the Absolute. In the center of the triangle is a phallus (linga), which represents the male aspect (Śiva) of the Absolute. The Goddess, who is represented by the symbols of earth and triangle, is again represented in the form of a coiled snake called kuṇḍalinī. The

Goddess is shown, in her sleeping form, as coiled around the phallus. While in sleep, the Goddess as the serpent covers the opening of the phallus.

It will not only be a mistake, but audacious, to interpret this imagery merely in sexual terms. The triangle and the phallus, no doubt, represent the male and female aspects of the Absolute, and therefore may be considered as being sexually inspired images. But sexuality in itself, however, does not explain as to what the symbolism of the root-cakra stands for. Such like images or symbols are cosmic in nature, in that the triangle and the serpent are the expressions of the primal state of Becoming. The triangle apes downward are the most abstract symbol of the Goddess as the creatrix of the manifest world. The earth is the symbol of motherhood, and therefore of life. The only images in the mystical centre that have a sexual bearing are the coiled snake (kuṇḍalinī) and the phallus (linga). But the coiled snake can also be interpreted in terms of expressing the idea of mystical time, of time before time began. [75]

The sleeping coiled snaked (kuṇḍalinī) may also be interpreted as signifying the state of inertia. This symbol, however, has to be seen in relation to the earth as the basis and source of existence. The sleeping coiled snake and her covering the opening of the phallus (linga) expresses the fact of the erring the source of the universe that is not yet manifest. We are told that the mystical center, called the root-cakra, is composed of matter, sound, odor and outgoing breath (apāna. There is also presence of Kandarpa, the god of live, in this mystical centre. Kandarpa, as the Lord of existence (jīveśa), upholds and sustains existence in the world. This symbolism agrees with the assertion that the unman fest ahs the possibility of become manifest. Insofar as the symbolism of the Goddess as vulva (yoni), in the form of triangle, is concerned, it explains and expresses the idea of organism passion (kamarupa).[76] Kamarupa is the symbol of the manifest, because it is organic passion that actualizes the manifestation of the unman fest in the seed (bīja). It is interesting to note that Kamarupa is also a very sacred Tantric pilgrim centre in Assam. The triangle is also spoken of the triadic city (Tripurā).[79] Tripurā is said to be a dwelling place of the Goddess Tripurā.

The arousal of the dormant coiled snake, viz., of Kuṇḍalinī, is of utmost importance in Tantricism. The coiled snake, when aroused, moves upward through the central mystical channel called susumnā. To the right and left of the susumna are idā and pingalā channels, which parallel the lalana and rasana channels of Buddhist Tantricism. The ida and pingalā veins symbolize the sun and the moon, life and death. These two channels also have been identified with the life-giving rivers. These two veins also demonstrate that opposites necessarily do not express themselves in terms of male-female polarity, as both the veins are of feminine gender. There are, however, some texts that do not allow this kind of generalization, as, for example, Satcakraṇīrupaṇa,[78] identifies ida with Śakti and pingala with Puruṣa.

Thus it is clear that Tantric symbolism is complex and intricate. It is now clear that Tantric imagery or symbolism needs to be interpreted with care and caution. Each image has many layers or shades of meaning. At the phenomenal level, the images may seem to be sexual in orientation, but their aim is to point out the way towards that is behind what appears to the senses.

Thus Tantricism is concerned, it believes that the actual existence of everything, whether mundane or supramundane, is Śiva, who is God in its absoluteness.[79] Śiva as Absolute God is self-luminous, viz., light of consciousness. It is the luminous (prakāśa) aspect of the Absolute that is self-evident on account of the fact that consciousness reveals rather than conceals.[80] The revelatory nature of consciousness is reflected in the act of self-awareness of every being that is conscious of itself, which means that one is conscious of oneself on account of the luminosity of consciousness. Being luminous, the light of consciousness thereby illumines everything that is manifest. A thing is manifest because of the luminosity of consciousness. If consciousness was not luminous, nothing would be manifest, or, should we say, everything would be enveloped by darkness. In such a situation nothing would be known, and so there would exist no possibility for knowledge of anything. Since such a situation of non-knowledge does not exist, it means that consciousness is of the nature of light – and the function of light is to reveal itself as well as what comes into its ambit. Since entities are manifest, so their existence is permeated by the presence of the revealing light of consciousness.[81] To shine and to make everything shine is the nature of consciousness.[82] This kind of theistic non-dualism is also known as the pratyaksavāda,[83] viz., a viewpoint that believes that the possibility of direct knowledge of the Absolute exist.

The other aspect of the Absolute is characterized by dynamism (vimarsā). It is such a functional aspect whereby the Absolute engages itself in the continuous manifestation of itself as the phenomena. It is this aspect of the Absolute that appear as the phenomena or what we call the categories of existence. Whatever there is in the manifest universe, it is the self-manifestation of the Absolute. Those who are perfect Yogīs realize and perceive everything in the universe as the Absolute. They see the Absolute not only in the universe, but also beyond the phenomena, which establishes the fact that the Absolute as light is transcendent and as movement is immanent. The Absolute shines forth both as cosmos and being the Absolute, beyond the cosmos. This twofold movement within the Absolute parallels the movement of emission and of withdrawal, of manifestation and dissolution. It is the dynamic aspect that is predominant when the Absolute emits out of itself the manifest categories of existence – and so accordingly this aspect reflects the immanent nature of the Absolute. When the Absolute as consciousness abides in itself, it denotes withdrawal, and it is through the process of withdrawal that the categories of existence dissolve into each other. This aspect of the Absolute is called the transcendent one. The Absolute accordingly is termed as being both transcendent and immanent. The Absolute, when conceived as God, is endowed with the absolute powers of will, knowledge and action.[84]

The Theory of Creation

The Tantric theory of creation has to be interpreted within the philosophical conceptual framework that understands the absolute as God precisely because of having a sovereign will. The theory is, therefore, called the principle of absolute freedom or will (svatantryavāda).

According to this theory, the creation emerges on account of the sovereign will be of manifest realm, it just occurs merely by willing. The theory maintains that God causes the emergence of the universe out of himself though his sportive will. Playfulness is the essential nature of the Lord. God while giving rise to the categories of existence (tattva), does not depend for this activity on anything except upon himself. Every component of the universe exists in God as a potentiality. It is within God that everything exists as his very own self, viz., as an infinite and eternal "I". The "I" as consciousness vibrates within and without God,. The Absolute as consciousness is not passive or inactive or motionless like space. Consciousness is characterized by an innate vibration or motion (spanda). Due to the stir within consciousness the Absolute thereby appears as Śiva (viz., God), Śakti (viz., the absolute Godhead), Sadāśiva (via., God in a relative from when absorbed in the playfulness of diversity), Isvara (viz., God in relation to cosmic functions), and Suddhavidyā (viz., God in his revelatory aspect). These five cosmic functions of the Absolute as God are carried out through his sovereign will. Insofar as the manifestation of phenomena is concerned, it is a process of the Absolute in terms of which its essential nature gets obscured or concealed. The Absolute, as it were, become a limited being by atomizing itself into phenomenal categories. Thus the Absolute, on the one hand, appears as a limited being and on the other hand, as insentient elements.[85] The insentient elements were as substances for the manifestation of inanimate matter. The sentient beings, being covered by the veil of māyā, are reduced to finitude and accordingly are called atomic (aṇu) or finite bonded subjects (pasu). As a limited being, the bonded individual thinks of himself as a limited ad finite being. Upon restricting the expanse of consciousness, the differentiates himself as distinct from other particulars, and thereby is unable to recognize himself as being essentially identical with the Absolute. It is the Lord (Iśvara)[86] that really is the cause of this phenomenal manifestation, which serves as a principle of concealment of the Absolute, and thereby becomes the cause of phenomenal diversity.[87]

As a manifest, category, the universe reflects God. This appearance of God through the universe is similar to the reflection in a mirror. The manifestation of the Absolute as the universe does not imply that the Absolute is transformed, for all practical purposes, into the universe. It is not a kind of transformation that we observe in the transformation of milk as curd. If such a transformation were to occur, then God would no more be God, because he would become subject to every kind of modification. The Tantrikas assert that the manifestation of the Absolute as the universe in no manner alters the essential nature of the Absolute.[88] By Virtue of the light of consciousness the entire creation is illumined. The elements of the universe shine in the Absolute as consciousness, and to shine as consciousness is their ultimate condition (paramārtha-sattā). As the elements are of phenomenal nature, they thus come within the ambit of what is called abhasa, viz., the categories of existence are of the nature of psychic light that shine in the luster of the light of consciousness (prakāśa).[89]

The Nature of Spanda

The Tantrikas, upon postulating the concept of spanda (vibration), wanted to assert that the Absolute is not a lifeless and impersonal being, but has all the powers that establish its sovereign and free will and it is the idea of spanda that makes the Absolute of Tantricism, in comparison to the passive (śānta) Absolute of Advaita Vedānta, dynamic and personal. Tantricism believes that the vibration or movement is an innate aspect of the Absolute, and this we discern when the sentient beings engage themselves in such acts that involve knowing and doing.[90]

The term spanda is derived from the root spadi, "to move a little" (kiṃcit-calana). As such, spanda is understood as a spontaneous spiritual activity of consciousness, which is realizable through certain yogic techniques that Tantricism has devised for its adherents. It means that spanda must always be shining forth in terms of I-consciousness. It is so because, unless there is movement within consciousness, there is no possibility for consciousness to either reflect upon itself or upon that is outside it. The very act of reflection denotes that there is an "I" that engages in reflection. It is possible only if consciousness has movement. An immovable consciousness does not exist, because consciousness always is characterized by movement.

The Nature of Bondage

What is bondage? What is its cause? These are some of the questions that are constitutive of Indian soteriology. It is the ext of human bondage that has determined the soteriological goal of each Indian religious tradition. The soteriological text consists of the assertion that an individual being in the world experience, in one form of the other, suffering. There is suffering because of the very nature of phenomenal existence. Further it is also asserted that, insofar as a human being remains subject to space-time laws, he will experience every kind of limitation – and the limitation can be of will, of knowledge or of action. In short, the individual being has the experience of curtailment of freedom – and this curtailment of freedom is called bondage. The question that arises is: why does an individual experience the curtailment of freedom in the form of various kinds of limitation? The answer that is given is the following: it is because of ignorance. It all boils down to the fact that bondage is the other name of ignorance, which means that both of them are identical. This identity of the two can be expressed in this way: One is in bondage because of ignorance, and one is ignorant because of bondage.

Classification of Impurities

As absoluic as God, through the process of self-manifestation appears as an impure and limitation and limited existent. Through pure in its basic nature and structure the absolute appears in its manifest form as were a limited and inpure being by virtue of its own godhead the obsolute, which concealing its nature of obsolete purity manifests itself through a complex variety of limitation. It is process of materialization of godsfree will of concealing himself that appears in the form of impurity (mala).[92]

The Nature of Liberation

The meaning of the term "liberation" becomes understandable in the context of bondage. It is upon experiencing bondage that an individual aspires for a state of freedom where no form of bondage or limitation would be experience. The entire theological fulcrum of Tatricism, nay of entire Indian spirituality, is built upon these two concepts: Bondage versus Freedom.[93]

Each one of us, in one way or the other, experiences bondage in terms of the curtailment of freedom. For a Tantrika the root cause of this bondage is nothing else but ignorance. It is on account of ignorance that we superimpose the unreal upon the real as well the real upon the unreal. It is this misidentification of the real that results in the experience of bondage – and this bondage is experienced as existential pain or in terms of difference or limitation. It would mean that the existential limitations and pain would persist till the time the causal links of bondage are not cut asunder. The sundering of the connecting links of causal chain of bondage is dependent to what degree ignorance is transcended. The elimination of ignorance, however, is itself dependent upon the eradication of impurities. The down of divine knowledge concerning the unity of Being is determined by the eradication of impurities, which is to say that elimination of impurities is equivalent to the overcoming of ignorance. [94]

Tantric Praxis

Before we take the Tantric methods of liberation for consideration, let us, before anything else, try to understand such essential components of Tantricism that form the base of Tantric praxis (sādhanā). The most essential components of Tantric prasix consist of mantra, yantra, Mudrā, bhūta-suddhi, nyasaand meditational visualisation. It is only by understanding the significance of each component of Tantric praxis that a proper evaluation of Tantric methods of liberation can be made.

Mantra: Mantra is the heart and pulse of Tantric praxis. It is a technique that supplies the necessary amount of blood to all such veins that bring. Tantric praxis to its proper fructification. The term mantra is derived from the root man, "to reflect." By adding suffix tra to the term, the meaning that is derived thereby is soteriological, in that the term signifies "deliverance" or "salvation." Thus the term has been interpreted as a "means of liberation through the power of thought." It is this understanding of mantra that has made its meaning all the more important. Since no equivalent word is to be found in any European language, the term usually has been translated as denoting sacred syllables or formula. [95]

Tantricism did not by itself bestow the divine character upon the mantra. It has a background and a history. The mystical formulas (mantra) had a definite function in the Vedic sacrifice, and the Vedic religion was mainly characterised by such sacrifices that were considered functional and efficacious. The Vedic people believed that the mystical words, once uttered, establish or actualize realities which the words supposedly represent. In a manner of speech, the mystical words are supposed to be the expression of realities which they represent.[96] When a particular mystical formula is uttered, the very utterance of the mystical formula during the performance of sacrifice establishes the identity of the divinity or reality that the mystical formula embodies. However, only the Brāhmaṇa priest can utter the Vedic mystical formulas. In the case of Tantricism, it is the guru, instead of a priest, who alone is qualifies to transmit the mystical formula to the disciple.

As the mantra in both the Vedic religion and Tantricism is seen as the main vehicle or means of knowing intuitively or realizing the transcendent, so the Absolute, particularly in Tantricism, has been equated with the Silent Word (sabda = logos). This view of the Absolute as Word has given rise to the belief that the mantra is nothing but the manifest form of the Absolute as Sabda Brāhmin. This idea of the Absolute as the silent sound (anahata-nada) will play a very significant role in Tantric meditation. This idea of the Absolute as silent sound or unarticulated word is given further push by maintaining that the source of all uttered sounds is the silent sound, which is the Absolute. It is, thus, the silent sound, in the form of words (sabda-rāśi), which on the one hand, gives birth to the articulated sounds and, on the other hand, makes known to us all the differentiates objects (artha). The emergence of articulate sounds within the Absolute has four distinct stages of manifestation – and these stages are the following:

1. Parā-vāk represents the Transcendental, and thereby the undifferentiated, state of the Absolute as word. There is at this stage, complete unity between the world as silent ound and the Absolute.
2. Paśyanti-vāk is the stage of seeing, and so in it an unintended kind of activity is involved It is a stage in which the silent sound, for the first time, begins to express itself n terms of indistinct image or idea.
3. Madhyamā-vāk or the Middling is the stage in which the sound begins to manifest itself in the form of reflection or thought.
4. Vaikharī-vāk is the stage of Gross speech, viz., of sound that is articulated. What it amounts to saying is that the silent sound now manifests itself as the spoken speech, and it is spoken speech that it constitutive of language.

Corresponding to these four stages of manifestation of the absolute as silent sound, there is a simultaneous manifestation of the Absolute through its Śakti aspect. The stages are:

1. Parā-Śakti represents that state of Śakti of the Absolute that is considered as a mass of potentiality. It is in its atomic form, represented by the Kuṇḍalinī in the root wheel (mūladhārā-cakra), which is situated at the base of the rectum.
2. Paśyanti-Śakti is that aspect of Śakti that manifests itself as the creative pulsation of the Absolute, and is represented by the self-existent wheel (svadhisthana-cakra), which is the second mystical wheel of energy.
3. Madhyamā-Śakti is a stage of manifestation whereby Śakti makes itself manifest in the form of subtle evolutes of Nature (prakṛti) and is represented by the wheel of the city of jewels (manipura-cakra).

4. Vaikharī-Śakti is such a stage of manifestation of Śakti that its gross, and so represents materiality as such. It is at this stage that the Absolute, through its creative energy (śakti), becomes the gross universe. It is the mystical wheel of the silent sound (anāhata-cakra) that represents this aspect of manifestation.

Yantra: A yantra or a manḍala functions as an aid to visualization (Dhyāna) in the complex system of Tantric meditation. A Tantric practitioner is asked, when in meditation, to be so prepared as to be able to project mentally the images of deities by making use of the technique of visualization – and this he does through the medium of a yantra or a manḍala. In other words, it is through the means of a yantra that a Yogī visualizes the mental images he has of deities. The very word yantra is derived from the root yam, "to hold," "to sustain." The suffix tra denotes its instrumentality. A yantra, thus is understood in terms of a vehicle of a deity that is to be invoked.

A Yogī begins the process of elimination of that pertains to the external world the moment he has successfully internalized the yantr. The Yogī does not lose the lucidity of awareness that comes to him during the process of meditation. A Yogī, while in meditation, realizes complete identity with the yantra. The process of elimination through the visualization of a yantra connotes the dissolution of the Yogī as an experiencing subject, It is through the process of self-dissolution that a yogi reaches the summit of mystical experience, which is characterized by the absence of distinction of subject and object."

A variant of a yantra is manḍala. The function of a manḍala is the same as that of a yantra. A manḍala, however, is more complex in its design than a yantra. It is mainly used by the Buddhist Tantrikas.

Mudrā: The term Mudrā has a variety of meanings in Tantricism. The term Mudrā, in the context of a Tantric ritual, denotes both the parched grain as well as a woman. As parched grain, it is one of the five prohibited items that is used in a special Tantric ritual. The term also means a gesture, and as such indicats such postutes that a Yogī makes during worship or ritual. [97]

The function of a Mudrā is more or less, the same as that of a mantra. A mantra remains inefficacious if it is not accompanied by a proper hand gesture (Mudrā). It is mantra, Dhyāna and Mudrā that bestow perfection upon the Tantric practice. [98]

The Way of Śiva:

The way of Śiva (Sambhava-upāya) is also referred to as the way of will (icchā-upāya). It is so termed because the ultimate state of Śiva is realized through the use of will. A Yogī who has reached the mystical state of identity in difference through the cultivation of the way of Energy steps automatically into the way of Śiva. The Yogī of the Way of Śiva has no need of such yogic supports or techniques that would be useful in making his mind-body complex disciplined, which means that the Yogī of this way is so advanced spiritually that he is no more dependent on such physical or mental crutches as the yogic techniques. The yogi is so advanced spiritually that all his sensorial and mental faculties are so introverted as to make them non-functional. Upon the attainment of introversion of the faculties, the yogic accordingly is freed from the sense of dependency on the yogic discipline or upon the methods of meditation. The interiority of the yogi is so pure as would terminate in the absorption in the Absolute. The mystical intuition surges and pervades the entire being of the Yogī. It is the Way of Śiva that leads the Yogī to the state of liberation (jivanmukti). [103]

The Tantric concept of liberation need not be interpreted in negative terms, which means that for a Tāntrika liberation is not merely freedom from human bondage. For him liberation has a positive aspect, which is expressed in terms of fullness (purṇatva). Thus liberation as freedom means the realization of the state of fullness of Being, a state in which imperfections or lacks are completely absent. As a state of fullness, liberation thereby denotes the bliss that comprehends the joy of both the sense and of the soteric release. This liberative joy of both the sense and of the soteric release.This liberate joy or bliss comes about upon the revelation of one's own essential nature. The liberated, thus, views the world as the reflection of eh self. [104]

The liberated Yogī is considered as a glorified soul on account of him having discovered the splendor of Being within. Upon the realization of the fullness of being, the yogi experiences the preseuce of divine fullness in everything that he perceives and feels. No mor caught in the cares of the world, he cares for nothing except that he remains buried in the bliss of Being. Perceiving the presence of Being everywhere, he thereby looks at his own body as the temple of God.[105]

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7. N.N. Vasu, op.cit., pp.10-11.
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9. The important left hand practices are the so-called Five Ms or five ingredients (panca-makara or panca-tattva), and they are meant, wine, fish, beans and coitus.
10. Rudrayāmālā. chap. 17.
11. Brahmanyāmala, Patala 1.
12. N.N. Vasu, op.cit., pp.10-11.
13. MotiLalPandit, cp.cit., 179.
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32. The Cultural Heritage of India, Calcutta, 1956, 4. 213 and Moti Lal Pandit op.cit., p. 186.
33. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 10.3.2.-4.
34. Chandogyopaniṣad, 2, 13.1-2, Although the female deities are not very prominent in the Vedic religion, yet the Tantric rite of addressing the male and female aspects of Reality may correspond to the Vedic rite of Apsaras and Gandharvas. Se A.B., Keith, The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisads, 1:180.
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102. Moti Lal Pandit, op.cit., p. 260-261.
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Chapter 8

TANTRIC TRADITION
(With Special reference to TEN MAHĀVIDYĀS)

The Tantra is the only Divine Revelation which throws open the gates of arcane nature to those who have the courage to peer into it. Man, in his onward faith must dive deep into natures heart to discover what he and universe of which he is a component part in. The method of spiritual self-culture leads him step by step to an acquaintance within nature's supersensory things high and low and teaches him how to utilize the services of the high and to ward off the evil influences of the low.[1]

Self culture according to the Tantric method develop the will and endows the worshiper with some lower tours (siddhis) within a contemporary start time. Those who are charged with these powers and are tempered to use them like to share the same fate with the block magicians. The end and aim of high Tantric sādhanā is the realization of AdvaitaTattva the attainment of kavalya Mukti (union with Brāhmin) and it is to this end that the tree sādhaka (worshipper) consecrates not only his present life, but a succession of lives intending over many ages. By intense sādhanā he has first to free himself from the chain of karma, which fastens him down to the three Lokas, *Bhūḥ*, *Bhūvaḥ* and *Svāḥ*, i.e., Earth, the atmospheric and celestial planes.

According to Brooks,[2] there are ten properties of Tantric phenomena – (1). They are extra-vedic i.e., not part of conventional canon of Hindu scriptures (2). They involve special forms of physical discripline such as Kuṇḍalinī yoga (3). They are at once theistic and non-dualistic (4). They contain elaborate speculatition on the nature of sound and the use of mantras (5). They involve the use of symbolic diagrams such as yantra or manḍals. (6). They place special stress on the importance of the guru. (7). They employ the bipolar symbolism of the God and Goddess. (8). They are secret (9). They prescribe the use of conventionally prohibited substances (i.e., 5 makāras (wine), madirā, (meat), māṃsa, (sexual intercourse), maithuna, matsya-(fishes) and (gesture) mudrās and (10). They require special form of initiation in which caste and gender are not the primary qualifications.

According to Śaṃkara, man is spirit (Ātmā) vestured in the mayik, falsities of mind and matter. He can accordingly then only establish the unity of Īśvara and Śiva by eliminating from the first māyā and from the second Avidyā, when Brāhmin is left as a common denominator. The Śākta, however, eliminates nothing for him in strictest sense, 'All in Brāhmin" for him, man's spirit (Ātmā) is Śiva. His mind and body are Śakti. But Śiva and Śakti are one. Paramātmā is Śiva-Śakti (Plate I) in undistinguishable union. Jivātmā is Śiva-Śakti in that state in which the self is distinguished from the not self. Man according to the Śakti Tantra is not spirit seemingly clothed by a non-brahmanfalsity, but spirit covering itself with its own power or Māyā-Śakti (Plates 22 and 24) All Śakti whether as cit –Śakti or māyā Śakti when therefore the Śākta Tantric says, 'All this is Brāhmin he means it literally. It means Brāhmin as Śakti as Māyā śakti and cit-Śakti.

The way of classifying manifestations of the goddess according to two polarities is to say that forms are Vidyā or Avidyā. That is some of her manifestations are meant to get rid of ignorance and delusion and grant liberating knowledge. (the Vidyā forms), while other forms are meant to reality and delude being as to the true nature (The Avidyā forms). According to this scheme, Kālī might being to the former type of manifestation, symbolizing the nature of ultimate truth, while kamalā, when is approached primarily for worldly rewards might being to the latter. The other Mahāvidyā might be arranged in similar fashion.

Worship of Mahāvidyā's

The Mahāvidyās are approached in a variety of ritual contents and the worship of one mahāvidyā may doffer from that of others. Some of the mahāvidyās for example have ancient and wide spread cults that emitted and still enlist, quite apart from the mahāvidyās as a group. This is the case with Kālī, Tārā, Tripurā-Sundarī and Kamalā for example. In general, though we can think of their worship and in temporary placed marked of by individual aspirants, where worship is undertaken in tantric fashion, either right handed or left handed. Although temple and tantric styles of worship have some similarities, they are quite different in mood and style. The majority of Text that mention the mahāvidyās are tantric. Indeed, it is probably fair to refer to the mahavdiyas as primarlity tantric goddess. It is clear that they are typically approached by means of Tantric rituals and that their worship is to the interpreted according to tantric principles. Although many tantric texts give the specific details for Pujā, which takes on a somewhat different meaning in a tantric context.

Indeed, a related idea is that the mahāvidyā's represent different stages or aspects of a woman's life cycle. In ancient Greek religion, the divine feminine was said to reveal herself in three main forms, corresponding to the "three ages of woman," Maiden Mothers and Crona. It is learnt that nine Durgās (Plate 4) a group of goddess in Kāśī (Varanasi) who are different form of Durgā are considered by a female. Devotee of Durgā to represent different stages of goddess and by extension a woman's life cycle. This scheme has some plausibility vis-à-vis certain goddesses in the Mahāvidyā group. Dhūmavatī for example, might represent his goddess in old age. She is usually shown as aged and is nearly always described as a widow. Other members of the group particularly Ṣoḍaṣī (Sundarī) are said to be sixteen years old. Other Mahāvidyās such as Bhairavi in her form as Annapurṇā Bhairavī have matronly qualities.

Among ten mahāvidyās, what is one to make of a group of goddesses that includes a goddess who cuts her own head off, another who prefers to be offered polluted items by devotees who themselves are in a state of pollution, one who sits on a corpse while pulling the tongue of a demon, another who has sex astride a male consort who is lying on a cremation pyre, another whose couch has as its legs four great male gods of the Hindu pantheon, another who prefers to be worshiped in a cremation ground with offerings of semen and yet another who is a haglike widow?

Are these goddesses, who are known as the ten Mahāvidyās, bizarre creations of radical groups within the Hindu tradition, obscure beings whose significance is peripheral to the basic them of Hindu spirituality? We should dismiss them as tangential, perhaps even irrelevant, to Hindu religion. After years of studying and musing on them, it seems to me that there is logic to the group as a whole and that even its most outrageous members, if understood within their proper context, reveal important spiritual truths. [3]

We know the Mahāvidyās from a variety of sources. Many goddess temples across North India contain paintings and images of them, Contemporary lithographs portray them both as a group and individually. Dhyāna mantras describe them for liturgical and meditative purposes, and they are the subject of several tantric digests.

The Mahāvidyās have been known as a group since the early medieval period (after the tenth century AD). Some of them predated this development and continue to be very well known in their own right, such as the fierce black goddess Kālī. She is also usually the primary, or adi, Mahāvidyā, Kamalā, who is the same as the very popular goddess Śrī Lakṣmī, is also a member of the group. Tārā and Tripurā sundarī, lesser known but still far from obscure, are other examples of Hindu goddesses who are popular on their own and as part of the group. On the other hand, Bagalāmukhī, Chinnamasta, Dhūmavatī and Mātaṇgī are rarely mentioned apart from the Mahāvidyās.

The aim of this study is to reflect on the meaning of the Mahāvidyās, both as a group and as individual deities. As a group the Mahāvidyās present a curious collection. It is not at all apparent why these particular ten goddess have become associated with one another. As for the individual goddesses, several are obscure and have received no scholarly attention. In some cases the sources available on individual Mahāvidyās are so limited that it is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct their histories or gain a clear impression of their worship. In many respects this study is not definitive or conclusive. It is described the Mahāvidyā tradition in the hope that it will encourage other scholars to undertake more details studies of the group and of its individual members.

Throughout the study of the Mahāvidyās, it is believed that the Mahāvidyās are "all one". Sometimes they were responding to a question concerning the significance of the group as a whole and sometimes to one concerning the peculiarities of an individual goddess. Such questions as, "Why does Bagalāmukhī like yellow?" What does the name Bagalāmukhī mean, and what is the significance of the name Mātaṇgī?" often elicited a look of incomprehension followed by the comment that all of the Mahāvidyās are the same: they are all different expressions of the same goddess, who enjoys taking many forms for her own pleasure and the needs of her devotees. The kind that Hindu often make to non-Hindus who stand bewildered before the fantastic array of divinity expressed in the immense Hindu pantheon. After a careful study of the individual Mahāvidyās, however, it became apparent that in many ways this comment, "They are all one," is important in understanding the significance of the individual manifestations and their worship.

Texts that dwell in detail on the Mahāvidyās – the *Tantrasāra*, *Śākta-pramoda*, *Śaktisāṃgama-tantra*, and many others – discuss each Mahāvidyā according to a clear structure. That is, the description and worship of each goddess is outlined in very similar terms, no matter how different she may appear from the others. She is made to conform to an accepted structure that has at least two central components: (1) a ritualistic approach to the deity that is individual and tantric in nature and (2) a philosophical/mythological paradigm of the Mahādevī (great goddess) to which the individual Mahāvidyā is compared or equated.

Whether the Sādhaka (practitioner) worships Kālī or Kamalā, whether one seeks worldly boons or spiritual awareness, set patters of worship determine how one approaches the deity. The adept must know, "perfect," and repeatedly recite the goddess's mantra (*japa sādhanā*) throughout the worship rituals; carefully select and "protect" a place of worship with the appropriate mantras and mudras (hand gestures); correctly imagine and interiorize the goddess; draw or carefully imagine and worship her yantra: invoke the goddess's hymns, including her hundred and thousand name hymns; offer her standard sixteen – part pujā (worship), or an abbreviated form of it and make his or her wish or wishes known to the chosen deity. The overall intent of the worship also has normative aspects. In general, the Sādhaka seeks to identify with the goddess in question, to have a vision of her, and to gain a boon that is understood to be part of her "store" of grace. In the logic of worship, if one is able to become the goddess, one can obtain that which she possesses, be it redemptive knowledge or the power to annihilate one's enemies.

This type of worship, generally known as tantric (as opposed to Vedic or purāṇic), is strongly individualistic. Tantric texts emphasize its secrecy. The mantras of the goddesses, which are the basic building blocks of tantric worship and represent the essential power of the goddesses, are always disguised and must be decoded by those with special knowledge before their exact components can be understood. A guru, a spiritual master who is expert and accomplished in the worship of a particular goddess, transmits the mantras of that goddess, and other details of worship, to the initiated individual. The guru gives this information only after determining the capability of the adept. Furthermore, the guru chooses the goddess whose peculiarities match the predilections of the initiate. An ideal match is supposedly made according to the guru's superior spiritual intuition and knowledge of both the initiate and the goddess. She becomes the initiate's special goddess, to whom he or she will devote intense energy over a lifetime.

It is uncommon for a person to be initiated into more than one goddess. It is more typical for someone to focus on one particular goddess and to find in her the satisfaction of all his or her worldly and spiritual needs. For the adept, this goddess becomes the Great Goddess. This relationship between the goddess and the practitioner is individual and personal and in this sense is secret. That is, only the devotee and the goddess (and perhaps the adept's guru) know its nature and peculiar features. It is not shared with the public, not even with family members.

The philosophical/ mythological model to which most of the individual Mahāvidyās conform is exemplified in the *Lalita—sahasranāmā*, an early thousand name hymn in praise of Tripurā-sundarī in her form as Lalita. This text attributes several dominant characteristics to Lalita. It identifies her in a number of ways and in many epithets at the highest reality in the cosmos, identical with certain philosophical absolutes such as Brāhmin. As the highest reality, she oversees the three principal cosmic functions: creation, maintenance, and destruction. Related to this role as cosmic queen is her role as slayer of demons. She protects the world and the position of the gods by defeating demons that they have found too formidable. In this respect she is said to transcend or empower the great male gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, who are often said to be helpless in the face of the demons she defeats. She is identified with the physical creation itself. She is prakṛti, the inherent or vital principle of creation. She is also usually identified with śakti (the inherent power of creation), atman (the spiritual essence of reality) and puruṣa (another term denoting the spiritual aspect of creation). She is often described as the consort of Śiva and in this role is a model wife. She has many benign qualities and grants boons to her devotees, including spiritual attainments and enlightenment. She is also said to have fierce, terrible, frightening aspects, and sometimes she is said to like meat, liquor, and blood (all considered polluting in the Hindu tradition). She is also lovely to behold and erotically powerful?

The ways and extent to which an individual Mahāvidyā conforms to this model vary, to be sure. As one might expect, hymns to goddesses such as Kālī and Chinnamasta paint them in rather fierce tones, while Kamalā and Bhūvaneśvarī are fairly benign in their hymns. But each goddess in her own way approximates the paradigm. From descriptions of Kālī in her dhyāna mantras, one might expect her to lack any pacific or nurturing qualities, but her thousand name hymns describe her as having both. From Dhūmavatī's dhyāna mantras, one would expect that she would lack all positive, beneficent features, but her thousand name hymn says that she has many such qualities. Conversely, one is surprised to find fierce or terrible aspects to Kamalā, given her strong associations with good fortune, fertility, and royal authority, but such qualities are mentioned. It is also surprising, given the descriptions of most of the Mahāvidyās in their dhyāna mantras and the stories about their origins, that every one of them is strongly associated with Durgā in her role as demon slayer. Each goddess, no matter how remote she may seem from the Great Goddess in other says, in her thousand name hymn is associated with protecting cosmic order by slaying demons. This is striking, given how different some of the Mahāvidyās appear to be from each other.

These texts seem to make the point that, indeed, in the case of the Mahāvidyās, "all are one." The origin myths of the group as a whole also make this point, saying that all ten forms arose from one goddess (Satī, Kālī or Durgā) and all are different facets, aspects or avatāras of that goddess. The hymns to the individual goddess also seem to make the point by suggesting that an adept who delves deeply enough into any one of the Mahāvidyās will find them all in her,. They inhere in each other and represent different facets of a single, multifaceted being. The adept or devotee need not worship all ten Mahāvidyās to gain their assortment of blessing or siddhis. He or she need only cultivate an intense and sustained rapport with one goddess to discover the blessings of all.

But why would one want to receive the blessing of such goddesses in the first place? Why would a Hindu practitioner to out of the way to establish rapport with a goddess who is outrageous or bizarre? What are the blessings to be had from these unusual goddess? An important key to understanding, or appreciating, the Mahāvidyās. It is true that some of the Mahāvidyās are benign deities, associated with such worldly boons as wealth, fecundity, and security. However, most of the Mahāvidyās are associated with marginality, inauspicious qualities, pollution, and death; they might be termed antimodels, especially for women and their role violate approved social values, customs, norms, or paradigms. For example, the most powerful approved model for Hindu women for centuries has been the goddess Sītā, who is the ideal pati-vrata (a wife devoted to her husband). Hindu women for generations have been socialized to view Sītā as an ideal to imitate in their own lives. Sītā's husband is the be all and end all of her existence. Her thoughts and actions, wishes and dreams, all focus on him; her life only has meaning in relation to him. Most of the Mahāvidyās, however, either are independent from males or dominate (sometimes humiliate) them in one way or another. Many of the Mahāvidyās seem to mock the pativrata ideal and to present an alternative social role that is almost its exact opposite. These goddesses, if they allow males in their presence at all, demand to be served by them.

Several of Mahāvidyās also subvert the strong emphasis in the Hindu tradition on avoiding pollution. Death, which is highly polluting in Hindu culture, is a dominant theme in Mahāvidyās iconography and worship. Several Mahāvidyā goddesses dwell in cremation grounds and sit on corpses. Several wear garlands of several heads (always male) or hold severed heads. Several receive blood sacrifice, always of male victims. Several like blood (which is itself polluting), perhaps need it, and sometimes are said to be smeared with it. Several of eh Mahāvidyā goddesses are said to be smeared with it. Several of the Mahāvidyās goddesses are also sexually aggressive. Sexual fluids are polluting in Hindu culture, and the sexually powerful nature of the Mahāvidyās suggests that they are in a polluted state. They are often shown having sex, always in the so-called dominant or reverse position, that is, on top of their consorts. In the case of Mātaṇgī, we have a goddess who prefers pollution and who requires her devotees to be in a state of pollution when they offer her polluted substance, such as menstrual blood. [4]

In many ways the goddess Kālī, who is almost always named as the first of the Mahāvidyās, is the prototype of the group in terms of being antimodel. She haunts cremation grounds. She wears in garland of severed human head, which are often gushing blood that smears her body. She holds a freshly severed head in one of her hands. She receives blood sacrifice at her temples. She rides a ghost or a corpse as her vehicle. She is almost always naked. She is aggressive and is often standing on her male consort. She is sexually powerful and is shown having sex astride her consort (who sometimes lies on a funeral pyre). Her companions are ghosts, jackals and female furies. Her hair is wild and unbound. Her tongue lolls out grotesquely, rudly, suggesting an insatiable, indiscriminate hunger and thirst. Kālī insults, subverts and mocks the social status quo, particularly as it defines proper behavior for women.

Appreciating the liberating potential of antimodels, is one way of appreciating the Mahāvidyās. There is an insistence in Hinduism that the world as it appears to us is a show, that there remains hidden from our normal view in aspect of reality that is different, perhaps shockingly different, from our ego-centered way of apprehending it. The world is not the way we like to think it is, and the sooner we realize that, the quicker we will make progress in acquiring spiritual maturity. The Mahāvidyās, as antimodels, are awakeners, visions of the divine that challenge comfortable and comforting fantasies about the way thing are in the world.

The Ten Mahāvidyās

The order in which the Mahāvidyās are given varies somewhat, as do the goddesses included in the group (Plates 33 and 34). In contemporary sources, however, the following goddesses in the following order are most common: (1) Kālī (2) Tārā (3) Tripurā-sundrī (Ṣoḍaṣī) (4) Bhuvaneśvarī (5) Chinnamasta (6) Bhairavī (7) Dhūmavatī (8) Bagalāmukhī (9) Mātaṇgi and (10) Kamalā. The ten are described in most sources as follows:

1. **Kālī is black,** which in fact is what her name means (Plates 6 and 7). She has a fierce countenance, stands on the supine body of the god Śiva, and has four arms. Her upper left hand holds a bloodied cleaver and her lower left hand a severed head. Her right upper hand makes the sing "fear not," and her lower right hand makes the gesture of bestowing boons. She is naked, apart from a garland of severed heads and girdle of severed arms; her hair is unbound and disheveled; and she is often standing in a cremation ground or on a battlefield. She is almost always mentioned as the first of the Mahāvidyās and occupies a preeminent place in the group. In some texts and in some settings, the other Mahāvidyās are understood to arise from her and to be her different forms.
2. **Tārā is usually given as the second Mahāvidyā** (Plates 33 & 34) and in appearance she is similar to Kālī. She is dark; her left foot is placed on a corpse

or on Śiva; she wears a tiger skin; her hair is tied in a long braid; she is potbellied and has four arms. In her left hands she holds a knife and a severed head, and her right hands make the signs of giving favors and granting fearlessness. She often stands in the midst of a cremation fire.

3. **Ṣoḍaṣī (also known as Tripurā-Sundarī** (Plates 8, 35 & 36) Lalitā and Rajarajeśvarī) is a beautiful young girl of sixteen with a red complexion. She is sometimes shown astride Śiva in sexual intercourse. They are on a pedestal or couch supported by the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and Indra. Some descriptions say that the four gods who support her pedestal are Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and Yama. Sometimes she is said to sit on a lotus that emerges from the navel of Śiva, who is reclining below her. Her four arms hold a noose, goad, bow, and arrows.
4. **Bhūvaneśvarī, who is said to nourish the three worlds,** holds a piece of fruit in one of her four hands, makes the sign of assurance with another, and holds a goad and a noose in the other two. Her breasts are large and ooze milk. She has a bright, light complexion and smiles pleasantly.
5. **Chinnamasta has cut off her own head with a sword (Plates 40 and 47).** Her left hand supports her head on a platter, and the right hand holds the sword with which she cut it off. Three jets of blood gush from her neck: one stream enters the mouth of her severed head; the other two jets enter the mouths of two female companions. Chinnamasta stands on the copulating bodies of the goddess Rati and her husband Kāma, the god of sexual lust. They in turn are lying on a lotus or sometimes a cremation pyre. Sometimes Chinnamasta (with her head chopped off) is shown astride Śiva, copulating with him as he lies beneath her. Her hair is loose, and she is naked.
6. **Bhāiravī has a fierce appearance;** her primary role in the cosmic process is destruction. Her complexion is said to be as bright as thousands of rising Sun. She wears a garland of skulls and clothes made from the skins of demons she has killed; her feet and breasts are covered with blood. Her four hands hold a rosary and a book and make the signs of fearlessness and grating wishes. The Kālikā-purāṇa says that her eyes roll from intoxoxication and that she stands on a corpse. [5]
7. **Dhūmavatī (Plates 38 and 39) is tall, with a pale complexion and a stern,** unsmiling face. She is dressed as a widow, in white clothes with no adornments. Her clothes are dirty and her hair disheveled. She is toothless, her breasts long and pendulous, and her nose large and crooked. She is hungry and thirsty, has a quarrelsome nature, and rides a crow or is seated on a chariot. She holds a winnowing basket and sometimes a trident.
8. **Bagalāmukhī, "she who has the head of a crane,** "usually sits on a throne of jewels, which is sometimes in the midst of a body of water. She is dressed in a yellow sari. In one hand she holds a club, with which she is about to beat a dark-

complexioned enemy. With another hand she is pulling his tongue. Sometimes she sits on a corpse, and in some cases she has a crane's head, or a crane is her vehicle, or vābana.

9. **Mātaṇgī has several different forms (Plates 41 and 48).** Usually she is a beautiful young woman with a dark or black complexion. The moon adorns her long hair, and she sits on a jeweled throne. She wears a beautiful robe and a garland of flowers. Her four hands hold a goad, noose, sword and club. Her eyes are described as intoxicated from passion.
10. **Kamalā is a beautiful young woman with a golden complexion.** Two elephants flank her and pour pitchers of water on her while she sits on a lotus and holds lotuses in her hands. She is clearly a form of the goddess Laksmī, one of whose common epithets is Kamalā, "Lotus."

This list of the Mahāvidyās is nor unvarying, lists or depictions of the Mahāvidyās almost always include Kālī, Tārā, Chinnamasta, Bagalāmukhī, Tripurā-sundarī (Ṣoḍaṣī), and Dhūmavatī, but the others are sometimes excluded. At times, well-know goddesses such as Durgā, Annapurṇā (she who is full of food), and Kamakhyā (she whose eyes express desire) may be included in the list, which is the case in the Cāmunḍātantra. At other times obscure goddesses such as Vāsalī, Bālā, and Pratyāngīrās will be included.[6] In addition, the order is which the Mahāvidyās are given varies, although Kālī is almost always named as the first of the group and Tārā as the second.[7] The number of Mahāvidyās also varies. The *Niruttara-tantra* lists eighteen Mahāvidyās,[8] while the *Nāradapancanitra* says that there are seven million Mahāvidyās.[9]

Literacy and Iconographic Contents

The Mahāvidyās are prominent primarily in tantric literature and in a few late *śākta purāṇas* and *upa purāṇas* (minor, later or subsidiary purāṇas). The tantras contain little narrative material about the Mahāvidyās. They are primarily interested in providing the details of how to worship the Mahāvidyās and do not dwell on the meaning of their symbolism or stories that feature them. A typical tantric treatment of a Mahavidyaincludes, first, her manta, which is believed to represent her essence; a devotee seeking the goddess's blessing or power must repeat it continually. Next, the goddess's dhyāna (meditation) mantra describes her physical appearance in some details; again, the devotee is to fill his or her mind with this description of the goddess while ritually approaching her. The test also gives the goddess's rubasya (essence or secret), which is usually similar to her dbyana mantra. It also lists her kavaca (armor), usually in the form of a prayer to protect her devotee on all sides. A tantra usually includes the goddess's namastotra, a list of her names or epithets. Sometimes it describes her yantra (a schematic drawing generally composed of circles, triangles, and stylized lotuses), along with directions for constructing and meditating upon it. In addition to this, the text sometimes gives directions for routine pujā (worship), in which various items are offered to the goddess.

In purānic literature, only a few late texts mention the Mahāvidyās. They do, however, contain fairly detailed stories about the origin of the Mahāvidyās as a group. These myths are important in providing interpretive contexts for the group as a whole.

Certain goddess hymns also mention the Mahāvidyās. For example, they are named in the Ḍurgā-cālisā, a famous hymn of forty verses to the goddess Durgā. They are also mentioned in the Kamakhyā-cālisā. A hymn to the goddess Gangā says that the Mahāvidyās Tārā, Dhūmavatī, Mātangī, and Bhairavī are her manifestations. The purpose of their inclusion in such hymns is to demonstrate that the main deity being praised – for example, Durgā, Kamakhyā, or Gaṇgā – appears in many forms throughout the worlds and that all goddesses are simply her manifestations.

Iconographically, the Mahāvidyās are often shown as a group in goddess temples. Their images are usually painted on the temple walls; more uncommonly, they may be represented by stone or metal images. Sometimes the presiding goddess of the temple in which the Mahāvidyās are depicted is herself one of them. In the Kālī-bārī temple dedicated to the goddess Kālī in Simla, for example, the Mahāvidyās are painted on the walls surrounding the garbhagrha, the inner shrine room, which houses an image of Daksiṇa-Kālī. Kālī herself is depicted among the Mahāvidyās. [10] In a temple to Dhūmavatī in Varanasi, similarly, the Mahāvidyās are painted on the interior of the outer walls and include the usual group. Again in Varanasi, at the LakmiKund temple, the images of the Mahāvidyās are painted around the inside door frame of the main entrance to the temple and include Kamalā a form of Laksmī).

In other cases, the Mahāvidyās; are depicted in temples dedicated to goddesses who are not among the Mahāvidyās. Images of the Mahāvidyās are carved on pillars of a gate at Naina-devī temple in the district of Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh. They are shown on the interior walls of a temple dedicated to *Carai-devī-mātā* in Siddhanpur on the outskirts of Dharmasālā in Himachal Pradesh. Carai-devī is a local deity; her temple was established by truckers who sought the goddess's protection for their union building. At a Cāmūṇḍā-devī temple located about fifteen kilometers from Dharmasālā, the Mahāvidyās are painted on the interior walls of the central shrine. An inscription states that the goddesses have been depicted according to the Śākta-pramoda, a well-known text that describes the Mahāvidyās. Hindu texts, however, almost always distinguish Camaunḍa-devī from Kālī and they are different in appearance.

Two other temples whose primary deity is not a Mahāvidyā are interesting because they are related to Satī and the origin of the Mahāvidyās. The temple of Jvālāmukhī-devī in Himachal Pradesh prominently depicts the Mahāvidyās on the walls of a large pavilion, separate from the main shrine, which houses an image of Durgā.[11] Jvālāmukhī-devī's temples is said to be the place where the goddess Satī's tongue fell when her body was chopped up by Viṣṇu and so is one of the Śāktapiṭas, sacred goddess sites scattered all over India. As this is the case, Jvālāmukhī is associated with Satī, who, as we shall see below, is said to be the origin of the Mahāvidyā is certain mythological accounts of their origin. Similarly, the famous Kamakhyā-devī shrine near Gauhati in Assam is said to be the place where Satī's yoni (vulva) fell to earth. The hillside on which the main shrine is located has small shrines to each of the Mahāvidyās.

At the Brajeśvarī-devī temple in Kangra, large paintings in an alcove called the Śakti bhavan show the Mahāvidyās. The amber Fort, about eleven kilometers each of Jaipur in Rajasthan, has a temple to Sītā-devī; a large double door at the main entrance to the temple depicts the ten Mahāvidyās. In the Durgā Saptaśatī temple in Nagawa, just south of Varanasi, they are painted in a row on one of the inner walls of the main shrine. The Mahāvidyās are also shown in bas-relief on the exterior walls of the temple at the Ṛamakrishna math in Varanasi.

Temples dedicated to the group of Mahāvidyās themselves are rare, in my experience. In the section of north Calcutta known as Cossipore, near the cremation ground on the Hoogly River, is a small temple dedicated to the Dasamahāvidyās. It contains ten (icons) of the Mahāvidyās. Ṣoḍaṣī is in center and is larger than the rest. On her right, from the most distant to the closest, are Bagalā, Mātaṇgī, Kamalā, and Dhūmavatī. On her left, from closest to farthest, are Kālī, Tārā, Bhūvaneśvarī, Bhairaviā and Chinnamasta. The temple enshrines several lingaṁs (phalli), connoting the presence of Śiva and suggesting his connection with the Mahāvidyās.

The presence of the Mahāvidyās at the Kamakhyā temple at Kāmarupa in Assam is unusual in the abundance and variety of images throughout the site. [12] This temple is an important śākta center according to many texts, because it is the place where Satī's yoni fell to earth and hence her ādi piṭha (primordial or original seat). It is also strongly associated with the Mahāvidyās. Stone yonis in the main temple represent the Mahāvidyās Ṣoḍaṣī, Mātaṇgī and Kamalā. Indeed, some informants identify Kamakhyā herself with Ṣoḍaṣī. The other Mahāvidyās (and other goddesses as well) have small shrines or temples located nearby. Several of these smaller shrines are associated with Śiva lingaṁs. The Tārā temple is quite large and resembles the central shrine. The Bhairavī shrine has images of the other nine Mahāvidyās on the walls near the ceiling. The central representations of the Mahāvidyās in these shrines usually are not anthropomorphic and are sometimes difficult to see at all, as they are obscured by flowers, clothing or offerings or are located in underground caves that are open for darśan (viewing by devotees) only on special occasions. Sometimes this representation is a yoni and is associated with a spring (as in the main shrine as well).

The Mahāvidyās are prominent ichnographically in two large goddess festivals in Bengal, Durgā Pūjā (Navarātra) and Kālī Pūjā (Diwalī). During Durgā Pūjā, artisans construct thousands of large clay images featuring Durgā as Mahiṣāmardinī (the slayer of the buffalo demon Mahiṣa). These images are usually part of an elaborate tableau that includes the goddesses Sarasvatī and Laksmī and the gods Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. Traditional renditions of this divine tableau have a halolike panel called the calcitra (literally, "roof picture") behind and encircling the central image of Durgā. This fame depicts deities or scenes from Hindu mythology. It often shows the Mahāvidyās, giving the unmistakable impression that they are different forms of the goddess Durgā.

During Kālī Pūjā, devotees establish clay images of Kālī all over Bengal. The images are often set in a tableau featuring Śiva, Ramaskrishna, and Bamakhepa (two famous Bengali Kālī devotees) or some aspect of Kālī mythology or iconography.

Indeed, this is perhaps the central feature of Hindu śākta theology in those texts.[13] Many myths in Śākta literature describe a goddess, or the goddess, as producing other goddesses from her own body. In such cases she often announces that she assumes different forms at different times to maintain cosmic stability, to bless a particular devotee, or out of a sense of sport or playfulness. The theological idea is that ultimate reality which is female in essence and form, display herself in a great variety of ways for different purposes. Some texts even say that whenever a female being exists, there the goddess reveals herself, being present in every female form. This theme is strong and obvious in the case of the Mahāvidyās. Their presence in Devī temples seems to state. "This goddess enshrined in this place assumes many forms." The Mahāvidyās are the concrete expression of the idea of "many forms." In the case of goddesses who are indentified with a particular place, and who are not well known outside their local areas, association with the Mahāvidyās lends them a cosmic, universal, transcendent dimension. The presence of the Mahāvidyās in a goddess temple identifies a local or regional goddess with an all-India mythology or symbolic structure, lending her a certain prestige.

There is evidence that the tem avatāras ("descents" or incarnations) of Viṣṇu are the model for the tem Mahāvidyās as expressions of the Mahādevī; that is, the mahāvidyās represent, at least to some extent, a śākta version of the Vaiṣṇava idea. Comparison of the Mahāvidyās to the avatāras of Viṣṇu places a premium on their role as maintaining and sustaining the cosmic and moral orders. Individually and as a group, their positive, world-supporting natures are emphasized. The *Gubyatigubya-tantra*, for example, lists the Mahāvidyās and identifies each with one of Viṣṇu's avatāras; Kālī is said to have become Kṛṣṇa, Chinnamsta to have become Narasimha, and so on. The Toḍal-tantra, in chapter II, also equates the tem Mahāvidyās with the ten avatāras. An article on Tārā in Hindu says that the ten avatāras come from the fingernails of the Mahādevī and that the Mahāvidyā, which are also her forms, are like the avatāras in that they are created to help overcome *adharma* (evil or immorality). The *Muṇḍamāla-tantra* compares the ten Mahāvidyās to the ten avatars. A contemporary Hindu work also compares the Mahāvidyās to the avatāras. At the temple at the Ramakrishna math in Varanasi, the ten avatāras are sculpted on two exterior walls, five to a side. The Mahāvidyās are on the other two walls. The juxtaposition of the two groups suggests that the Mahāvidyās are the female counterparts of the ten avatāras.[14]

It is believed and faith that Bagalāmukhī is Vāmana, Kamalā is Viṣṇu, Kālī is Kṛṣṇa, Tārā is Rāma, Bhairavī is Rudra, Chinnamasta is Matsya, Mātaṇgī is Brahmā, Dhūmavatī is Varāha, Ṣoḍaṣī is Śiva and Bhūvaneśvarī is the formless Brāhmin (the absolute). It is stated that, like the avatāras of Viṣṇu, the Mahāvidyās were created to play positive functions in the world,. Tārā, for example, was created to defeat the thousand-headed Rāvaṇa, who appeared after Rāma's defeat of the ten-headed Rāvaṇa. The thousand-headed Rāvaṇa could be slain only by a woman, and so the Great Goddess took the form of Tārā to kill him. Kālī was created to eat and drink the blood of demons who threaten the world, and Chinnamasta, was created to delude the demons at the chinning of the ocean so that they would not get their share of the nectar of immortality. Chinnamasta took their share of the nectar, drank it, and then killed herself so that they were deprived of it. Ṣoḍaṣī was created to arouse Śiva to sexual activity to his creative powers could stimulate the world. Bhūvaneśvarī was created to save the world when it was taken under the waters of the cosmic ocean and thus plays the same role as the boar avatāra of Viṣṇu. Kamalā was created to speared wealth in the world. Mātaṇgī, who is the same as Sarasvatī, according to Swami Shastri, was created to spread music and education and to help human beings acquire liberating wisdom. Bagalāmukhī was created to paralyze enemies. Dhūmavatī was created to spread disease. Although this may not seem a very positive cosmic role, we might suppose that Dhūmavatī spreads disease to punish the wicked and support the moral order. [15]

Although an important aspect of Śākta theology stresses the place of the Mahādevī in upholding the cosmic order and the Mahāvidyās are sometimes likened to Viṣṇu's avatāṛas as playing positive cosmic roles, the Mahāvidyās seem only tenuously connected to this type of activity in most tantric and purānic texts that mention them. In most cases, as we shall see, the emphasis seems to be not so much on maintaining cosmic order and defeating demons as on the diversity of forms the Mahādevī assumes and by implication, the insistence that, through her many forms, she pervades all aspects of reality. That there are ten Mahāvidyās as a group, however, does seem best explained on the analogy of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu, which is an ancient, well-known, and popular feature of Hindu mythology. In fact, this explanation is supported by certain texts and by present day informants. Apart from ten Mahāvidyās, Annapurṇā (form of Pārvatī) – Plate 2 – Śiva's, form as Nilakanṭha (Plate 9) and Mahāmṛtunjaya (Plate 10), Biddhist and Jain deities eg. Acyāpta, Saraswatī, Ambīkā are of famous female deities (Plates 12 and 13), Plates 19 and 20. They also act as Tantrik Female divinities.

A. The Mahāvidyās as forms of Satī

Of the five versions of the Mahāvidyās origin, It is found only two that are firmly attested in literary sources. We shall look first at the most detailed version. In the *Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa* and the *Bṛhaddharma-purāṇa*, which are both late śākta upa purāṇas, probably written in eastern India after the fourteenth century c.e. the origin of the ten Mahāvidyās is recounted as part of the story of Daksa's sacrifice. This tale is ancient in the Hindu tradition and well known all over India;it is also an important śākta myth, being the prelude to the story of the origin of the śāktapithas, which are sacred centers of goddess worship throughout India. In early versions of the story, the Mahāvidyās do not appear; they enter it for the first time in these two relatively late purāṇas. By including their origin in this myth, of course, the authors of these texts have lent the Mahāvidyās considerable prestige, as the myth is well known and central to śākta mythology.

The account of the origin of the Mahāvidyās in the *Bṛhaddharma* and *Mahābhāgavata-purāṇas* is as follows. Once upon a time, Daḳsa decided to undertake a great sacrifice. He invited all the inhabitants of heaven, all the gods and goddesses, except his daughter, Satī, and his son-in-law, Śiva. Daḳsa was not found of Śiva as he disapproved of Śiva's odd habits and antisocial nature. Śiva, the archeypal yogi, was found of inhabiting lonely places and cremation grounds and surrounding himself with ghosts and goblins. When he was not going about completely naked, he wore animal hides. He often smeared his body with ashes and spent time in isolated meditation. To Daḳsa, he did not seem a fitting husband for his daughter, and so, Daks deliberately did not invite him or satī to his sacrifice. Śiva himself was indifferent to this snub, but satī was outraged and determined to attend her father's sacrifice in order to disrupt it and berate her father. Śiva, however, forbade her to go.[16]

Now the story departs from earlier versions by introducing in an account of the origin of the Mahāvidyās. Forbidden by Śiva to attend the sacrifice, Satī becomes enraged and accuses him of neglecting her. In her anger her eyes become red and bright and her limbs tremble. Seeing her fury, Śiva closes his eyes. When he opens them, a fearsome female stands before him. As he looks at her, she becomes very old, her graceful appearance disappearing. She develops four arms, her complexion becomes fiery and her hair disheveled, her lips are smeared with sweat, and her tongue lolls out and begins to wave from side to side. She is naked except for a garland of severed heads; she wears the half moon as a crown. Standing before Śiva, she blazes like a million rising Suns and fills the world with earth-shattering laughter.

Śiva is afraid and tries to flee. He runs around in all direction, but then the terrible, goddess gives a dreadful laugh, and Śiva is too petrified to move. To make sure that he does not flee from her terrible form, Satī fills the directions around him with ten different forms (the Mahāvidyās). In the Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa, when Śiva asks who these goddesses are, Satī answers that they are her "friends". Wherever Śiva goes or looks, he sees a dreadful figure and his fear increases. Unable to flee, he stands still and closes his eyes. When he opens them, he sees before him a smiling woman whose face is as pleasing as a lotus blossom. She is black, her breasts are large, and she is naked. Her hair is disheveled, and she glows with the brilliance of a million suns. Śiva asks: "Where is my beloved Satī?" She replies: "Do you not see Satī standing before you?"

Śiva then asks who the other goddesses are who surround him and is told their names: Kālī, Tārā, Kamalā, Bhūvaneśvarī, Chinnamastra, Ṣoḍaṣī, Sundarī, Bagalāmukhī, Dhūmavatī and Mātaṇgī. In relation to Śiva, who is facing south, Kālī is in front of him (to the south), Tārā above him, Chinnamastra to him right (west), Bhūvaneśavarī to his left (east), Bagalā behind him (north), Dhūmavatī to the southeast, Tripurā-Sundarī to the southwest, Mātaṇgī to the northwest, and Ṣoḍaṣī to the northeast. At one point, the Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa locates the Mahāvidyās relative to the goddess Kamakhyā (Plate 17 as Yoni) who is identified with Kālī, Kamakhyā (or Kālī) is in the center, seated on a corpse that is lying on a lotus that is resting on a lion. The text identifies the corpse as Śiva, the

Lotus as Brahmā, and the lion as Viṣṇu, so the goddess is supported by the three great male deities of the Hindu pantheon. The Bṛhaddharma-purāṇas does say that Tārā represents time and that Chinnamasta is emaciated and dreadful, but for the most part the two texts content themselves with making general comments about the group as a whole.

In both accounts, Satī, in her terrible, black form, which is sometimes said to be Kālī, tells Śiva that these ten goddesses are her different forms. In the Bṛhaddharma-purāṇas the Mahāvidyās as a group are said to cause trouble and conflict among people, but also to give spiritual liberation (mokṣa).[17] They are also said to bestow the powers of māraṇa (the ability to cause a person's death simply by willing it), uccaṭana (the ability to make one's enemy sick by willing it), stambbana (the ability to immobilize a person), the power to control another's speech, the power of remaining young oneself while causing another to grow old, and the power to attack another to oneself.[18] The Bṛhaddharma-purāṇas also says that when Brahmā creates the world and Viṣṇu maintains it, they use the power of the Mahāvidyās "like two arms."[19] These references suggest that the Mahāvidyās are associated with magical powers, which may be acquired by worshipping them.

After the Mahāvidyās have surrounded Śiva and he has been told who they are, he acquiesces to Satī's wish and says that she may attend her father's sacrifice. In the *Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa*, Tārā merges with Kālī at this point, and the other forms diaspear. Satī, in the form of Kālī, then goes off to Dakṣa's sacrifice and kills herself by throwing herself on the sacrificial fire. In the Bṛhaddharma-purāṇas account, Satī leaves the Mahāvidyās behind with Śiva, instructing them to look after him in her absence. She explains that she has created these forms to attend Śiva when she is away. Then Satī, taking on a form that wears a tiger skin and has disheveled hair, a fearsome face, and fiery red eyes, heads off to Dakṣa's sacrifice, flying through the sky. The rest of the story conforms to the account in the Mahābhāgavata-purāṇa.

In the version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās that is given in the Brhaddharma and Mahābhāgavata-purāṇas, there are several important points to be noted.

First, the myths make clear that Satī, or the goddess in the form of Satī, is a superior power to Śiva. He forbids her to attend her father's sacrifice, but she forces him to let her go by overwhelming him with her numerous and terrible forms. Both accounts of the story stress the fact that Śiva is afraid of the goddess in her terrible forms and tries to flee. The fact that goddess is able to physically restrain Śiva dramatically makes the point that she is superior in power. The theme of the superiority of the goddess over male deities is common in Śākta texts, so the story is stressing a central Śākta theological principle.

Second, the Bṛhaddharma- and Mahābhāgavata-purāṇas account of the origin of the Mahāvidyās stresses their terrifying aspects. Although other texts describe some of the Mahāvidyās as pleasant, beautiful and mild of manner, here they are, as a group, awful and frightening. The one goddess the story does describe in detail, the initial form taken by Satī, is particularly fearsome, and Śiva reacts to it by closing his eyes or trying to run away. This account stresses the dramatic effects the Mahāvidyās have on Śiva. He is frightened and repelled by them. They are terrible, not pleasing, in form.

Third, this version of the Mahāvidyā's origin emphasized that the ten goddesses are manifestations of Satī, or of the Great Goddess, who has taken the form of Satī. When Śiva asks who the Mahāvidyās are, Satī tells him they are forms or her friends. The myth makes clear that the Mahāvidyās are extensions of Satī's power. They embody her will and wrath and succeed in bending Śiva to her wishes.

Fourth, the appearance of the Mahāvidyās takes place in the context of husband-wife and father-daughter tensions. Daḳsa insults his daughter by not inviting her to his home for the sacrifice, and Śiva offends her by not allowing her to go to her paternal home. The Mahāvidyās are, at least to some extent, the embodiments of an offended wife and daughter. They are the embodiments of female fury precipitated by male neglect and abuse.

The cult of the goddess Nandā-devī of Garwahl in Himachal Pradhesh illustrates the potential danger posed by unfairly restricting a woman's freedom to return to her native village (the domain of her father), whether the impediments are caused by the father or the husband. Although local Garwahli literature stresses that a woman is totally transformed when she marries, becoming part of her husband's lineage, Garwahli women insist that females remain strongly identified with, influenced by and related to their home families and villages, their maits. Both men and women share the belief that a woman has the ability to effecting contact with her home village. The bride who has gone away, the "out married village daughter" (dhiyānī), should continue to be respected by her home village and must be invited back for all its important festivals and events. A village that neglects to do this risks her destructive curse, which could be ruinous. In the cult of the goddess Nandā-devī, a yearly pilgrimage wends its way through many local villages where she is worshiped, and this represent her return to her native village. If this pilgrimage is not undertaken, the goddess will be offended and assume that she is no longer loved and respected. Such implied neglect or indifference would court her wrath. [20]

A similar situation exists in the story of Satī. Her mait is not fulfilling its duty to her, because her father has not invited her home for his elaborate sacrifice. Furthermore, her husband, in forbidding her to return to her home village, is showing her serious disrespect. Both Śiva and Daḳsa become the targets of her anger. In the logic of the Nandā-devī cult, Satī returns to her home village enraged at her father's lack of respect for her and immolates herself in her father's sacrificial fire. He and his home are cursed and eventually destroyed by Śiva and his hosts when Śiva hears of Satī's death.

A fifth important point about this version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās is that these goddesses are associated with magical powers and have little or no connection with upholding the order of dharma. [21] They do not resemble the avatāras of Viṣṇu in either nature or function. They do not appear in order to defeat demons who threaten the stability of the world but in order to frighten Śiva into allowing Satī to attend her father's sacrifice. Their primary role in the story is to overpower an opponent, in this case, Śiva. The Bṛhaddharma-purāṇas says that the Mahāvidyās have been created to produce conflict and trouble among people [22] and that they confer the power to kill at will, to immobilize one's enemies, and so on. Indeed, the effect they have on Śiva underlines this aspect of their nature. Śiva is alternately frightened into fleeing and frozen with fear. Although other myths concerning individual Mahāvidyās suggest their world-supporting function, and in several instances the Mahāvidyās are compared to the Vaiṣṇava avatāras, this version of their origin only hints at world-supporting characteristics. Although some of the individual Mahāvidyās are more strongly associated with magical powers than others, as we will see below, this version of the group's origin says that the group as a whole grants these powers.

B. The Mahāvidyās as forms of Pārvatī

(Plate 2 as Annupurṇa)

According to *Tantraśāstra,* Śiva is living with his second wife, Pārvatī (whom he married after Satī killed herself), in her father's house in the mountains. One day, Śiva decides to leave. Pārvatī asks him to stay, but he refuses. When he attempts to leave, she prevents him from doing so by blocking the ten doors of the house with her ten forms, the Mahāvidyās. The esoteric meaning of the myth, according to the tantrikā, is based on an allegory. The house represents the human body, and the blocking of the ten doors means the blocking, or controlling, of the ten bodily apertures: two eyes, ears, and nostrils, plus the mouth, anus, penis or vagina and *Bṛahmaqrandhra* (an aperture at the top of the head). In this allegorical interpretation, Śiva's desire to leave Pārvatī's house presumably signifies the individual's desire to indulge the senses willfully, to act without yogic discipline and control.

This version bears similarities to the first version of the Mahāvidyās origin. As in the first one, the Mahāvidyās appear in order to restrain Śiva, to bend him to the goddess's will. He wants to leave his father-in-law's house, but she wants him to remain. The Mahāvidyās force the issue in Pārvatī's favour. It is also clear in this version that the Mahāvidyās are all forms of one goddess, in this case, Pārvatī. They represent various aspects of the goddess. As in the first version also, the appearance of the Mahāvidyās is the result of marital tension. In this case, however, the goddess's father seems to play little or no role. This version of the story also emphasized the superiority to the goddess over Śiva. The fact that Śiva and Pārvatī are living at her father'sin itself makes this point, as it is traditional in many parts of India for the wife no leave her father's home upon marriage and become a member of her husband's lineage and live in his home among his relatives. That Śiva dwells in Pārvatī's house implies her priority in this relationship. Her priority is also demonstrated in her ability, through the Mahāvidyās,to thwart Śiva's will and assert her own. [23]

This story lends itself to an allegorical interpretation of the Mahāvidyās as aspects or powers of the human organism, states of consciousness perhaps, rather than as world-supporting or cosmic powers. The teller's emphasis on this role in yogic concentration, or perhaps sādhanā (religions endeavor) generally, suggests that the Mahāvidyās are associated with facets, aspects, dimensions, or characteristics of the human organism, which in Tantras is understood to be the universe in macrocosm texts. The Śaktisamāgama-tantra, for example, says that the Mahāvidyās are connected with the five senses (sound, touch, color or sight, flavor, and smell) and the fie elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). Although the *Śaktisamāgama-tantra* does not specify which Mahāvidyā is connected with each sense or element, it is clear that they are associated with the fundamental makeup of humans.

The association of the Mahāvidyās with siddhis (magical powers) is also implied in this second version of their creation. Such powers are acquired by means of sādhanā, which almost always includes yogic practices aimed at controlling or enhancing the senses.

C. The Mahāvidyās as forms of Kālī

(Plates 6 and 7)
Other version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās is found in a contemporary Hindi book about the worship of Tārā. According to this version, Śiva is living with the goddess Kālī in the Satya-Yuga, the first and most perfect of the four periods of a world cycle. Eventually he grows restless and decides he is tired of living with Kālī. He gets up, and when she asks him where he is going, he answers: "Whether I wish." She does not reply, and he begins to wander off. However, in whichever direction Śiva goes a form of Kālī appears, one of the Mahāvidyās: first Kālī herself, then Tārā, Ṣoḍaṣī, Bhūvaneśavarī, Bhairavī, Kamalā Dhūmavatī, Mātaṇgī and Chinnamasta. Seeing these goddesses, Śiva loses his yearning to leave Kālī and wander about; having gained the knowledge (vidyā) that she pervades the entire cosmos and that wherever one goes her is there in one of her forms.

This version of the myth is obviously related to the first two in several respects. The Mahāvidyās arise as manifestations of a particular goddess, who is said to be Śiva's spouse. As in the other two versions, the goddess (Kālī, in this case) creates the Mahavidyasto prevent Śiva from leaving or fleeing. This version also gives no indication that the Mahāvidyās play a role similar to the Vaiṣṇava avatāras. Unlike the first two versions, however, there is less emphasis on marital tension, although the implication is that Śiva is going against Kālī's wish by trying to leave her and under about. This version also does not indicate that the Mahāvidyās are terrible or frightening (they are not even described) or that Śiva is afraid of them. The story does not even say that the Mahāvidyās prevent Śiva from leaving. It simply says that Kālī fills the whole cosmos with her forms.

The central point of this version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās, a point implicit in the other versions, is that it is impossible to go where the goddess is not. To depart (or flee) from her is impossible, as she pervades the entire cosmos in one form of another. She is everywhere; indeed, she is identical with the cosmos itself. The story told here also places a premium on the Mahāvidyās as revealing knowledge (vidyā), in this case, knowledge that Kālī pervades all of reality. In this sense the story interprets the mahāvidyās, not as avatāra-type figures who maintain the cosmos, nor as manifestations of magical powers or status of consciousness, but as sources of wisdom. The point of this version of the story is Śiva's enlightenment, which the Mahāvidyās bring about.

D. The Mahāvidyās as forms of Durgā

(Plates 3 and 4)

Contemporary oral tradition, supported by certain iconographic evidence, supplies yet a fourth version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās. According to this version, the Mahāvidyās appear when the great battle queen Durgā confronts the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. The myth of Durgā's defeat of these demons constitutes the third episode of the Devī-Mahātmya.and is also told in several other Purāṇas.[24] Although none of the texts that describe this battle mentions the Mahāvidyās, several people have told me that they fight in it as a group. Moreover, individual Mahāvidyās are sometimes associated with the myth, and there is, as we shall see, considerable iconographic evidence to support this version of the Mahāvidyās origin. A contemporary Hindu book on Tantra also alludes to this version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās: the author states that, in the beginning, the male gods were threatened by demons and appealed to the Mahādevī, who defeated the demons by taking on different forms, including the nine Durga[25] and the ten Mahāvidyās. [26]

The Devī-Mahātmya is the most famous and revered of all Hindu śākta texts. It was probably written around the sixth century C.E. and today occupies a central position in Śākta circles. Several commentaries have been written on it, and several subsidiary texts have arisen as addenda to it. [27] It is not surprising, therefore, that people associate the Mahāvidyās with this famous text. The nature of the text also invites such association, particularly the third episode featuring the defeat of Śumbha and Niśumbha. The theology of the Devī-Mahātmāya is summed up in that episode. Durgā is said to underlie or pervade the cosmos; to create, maintain, and periodically destroy it according to the rhythmic sequences of Hindu cosmology (12-33-35); and to assume different forms time to time when cosmic balance is threatened by enemies of the gods (11.38-51). The theology of the text is succinct: "Though she is eternal, the goddess becomes manifest over and over again to protect the world" (12.32). This is very similar to the Vaiṣṇava avatāra theology. When associated with this type of theology, the Mahāvidyās function becomes primarily that of upholding and protecting cosmic order. We have already seen that other texts compare the Mahāvidyās to the avatāras, so it is not surprising that some Hindus think they appear in the Devī-Mahātmya, even though they do not.

Another feature of the third episode of the Devī-Mahātmya makes it understandable that the Mahāvidyās would be thought to arise there. In the course of the battle, Durgā produces several goddesses to help her. She brings forth Kālī while confronting the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa (7.3-22) and calls upon her again for help in defeating Raktabīja (8.49-61). During the battle a group of seven goddesses, collectively known as the Maṭrkas, is created from certain male gods to help defeat the demons. They are Brahmāṇī, created from Brahmā; Maheśvarī, created from Śiva; Kaumārī, created from Kārttikeya; Vaiṣṇavī, created from Viṣṇu; Varāhī, created from the boar avatāra of Viṣṇu; Narasiṃhī, created from the man-lion (Narasiṃha) avatāra of Viṣṇu; and Aindrī, created from the god Indra (8.12-20). Later in the battle, when Durgā confronts the demon Śumbha himself, he challenges her to single combat, and she agrees saying that her battle companions are only her different forms (10.2-5). She then absorbs the Matrkas and Kālī into herself. They are furious warriors and near the end of the battle dance wildly, intoxicated on the blood of their slain victims (8.62). [28] The third episode, then, includes the creation of a group of goddesses who bear certain resemblances to the Mahāvidyās, giving rise to the tradition that the Mahāvidyās themselves appear in the Devī-Mahātmya. It is also the case that other texts compare individual Mahāvidyās to the Matrikas or give them Māṭṛkās names as epithets. The Mahāvidyā Tripurā-bhairavī, for example, in her sahasṭranāmā stotṛa (thousand name hymn) in the Śākta-pramoda, has the following epithets: Brahmāṇī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Varāhī, Cāmūṇḍā, and Indrāṇī.[29] They are the same as the names of the Maṭṛkās in the Devī-Mahātmya, except that the Śākta-pramoda substitutes Cāmūṇḍā for Narasiṃhi. The Mahavidyās Bhūvaneśvarī has among her many epithets Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmāṇī, Narasiṃhi, Maheśvarī and Varāhī. [30] (Plate 46)

There is also iconographic support for this fourth version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās. Contemporary religious art typically shows the Mahāvidyās surrounding a central goddess, none other than Durgā (in her form of Mahiṣāmardinī, slayer of the demon Mahiṣa) and the central figure of the Devī-Mahātmya. While contemporary art also depicts the Mahāvidyās surrounding Śiva and Satī as the central figures, the configuration with Durgā in the center is just as common, if not more common, at least in the areas with which is most familiar, Varanaṣi and Calcutta. The depiction of the Mahāvidyās on the calcitra of the Durgā images set up for Durgā also reinforces the tradition that the Mahāvidyās arise to help Durgā defeat demons and restore the stability of the cosmos. At the Durgā Saptaśatī temple in Nagawa, just outside Varanasi ((a temple dedicated to the Devī-Mahātmya, popularity known as the Saptaśatī), paintings of the Mahāvidyās on a wall of the inner shrine also dramatically associate the Mahāvidyās with Durgā, and specifically with Durgā as she appears in the Devī-Mahātmya. From these examples it is easy to conclude that the Mahāvidyās are forms of Durgā, and as Durgā is primarily a battle queen, it is also logical to assume that the Mahāvidyās play the role of supporting Durgā in her attempts to protect the cosmic order.

This version, then differs markedly from the first three in its view of the role and nature of the Mahāvidyās. This version does not mention marital tension, the goddesses do not appear in order to frighten or control Śiva, they are not associated with magical powers and they are in a battlefield rather than a domestic setting. Their association with the avatāras of Viṣṇu is heightened and stressed.

Stories associated with individual Mahāvidyās also tend to suggest this fourth version of their origin. An image maker in Varanasi, for example, Niśumbha and that she helped defeat these demons by employing acrid smoke, "like tear gas", against them. Dhūmavatī, "she who abides in smoke", is here interpreted as having a special weapon with which she defeats demons for the welfare of the world. [31]

It is believed that in conquest of demons. Śiva killed Tāraka, Kṛṣṇa defeated Kaṃsa, Rāma killed Rāvaṇa and Indra killed Vṛtra with the help of the Mahāvidyās. Likewise, Hanuman with the aid of the Mahāvidyās, defeated the female demon who tried to stop him from jumping to Lanka. That is, by propitiating the goddesses he was able to acquire the magical power of becoming very small and thus was able to enter the mouth of the female demon and destroy her from inside. [32] Indeed, at the Śankat-Mochan temple in Varanasi, a famous Hanuman temple, the Mahāvidyās are depicted around the ceiling of the porch in front of the shrine containing the main Hanuman icon.

When we look at the individual Mahāvidyās in detail, as we shall do below, it also becomes apparent that they are often associate with Durgā the demon slayer and the Devī-mahātmya myths. To take just one example at this point, Bhūvaneśvari in her sahasṛanāmā stotṛa in the Rudrayamālā has among her names several that directly identify her with Durgā, the forms Durgā takes in the Devī-mahātmya and the actions she performs there. She is called she who destroys Madhu and Kaiṭabha, she who slays Mahiṣāsura, and she who slays Śumbha and Niśumbha. These three names, that is, identify her with all three episodes of the Devī-mahātmya as the slayer of the principal demons.[33] She is also called Śivaduti, Cāmūṇḍā, and She who destroys Raktabīja, all of which are epithets of Durgā or one of Durgā's forms in the Devī-mahātmya. She is also called by the name Durgā itself.[34]

E. The Mahāvidyās as forms of Satāksī

The fifth version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās is told in the Devī-bhāgavata-purāṇa. As in the fourth version, they arise to defend the world against demons. Once upon a time the demon Durgama gained control over the universe and forced the gods into subservience. The gods appealed to the Mahādevī for help. She appeared in a form having innumerable eyes, all of which shed tears on seeing the pitiable plight of the gods, human beings and the earth as a result of demonic oppression. She was duly named Satāksī (she who has one hundred eyes). She then distributed fruits and vegetables from her own body to feed the starving being of the earth, which was suffering from drought. For this reason she was named Śākambharī (she who bears vegetables). A fierce battle then began between the goddess and the demon and his armies. The goddess created several groups of goddess allies to help her in this fight, and among them were the Mahāvidyās. The text says that these goddesses are her principal śaktis and have emerged directly from her body. It names them in the following order: Kālikā, Tāriṇī, Tripurā, Bhairavī, Kamalā, Bagalā, Mātaṇgī, Tripurā-sundarī, Kamaksyā, Tulaja-devī, Jambhinī, Mohinī and Chinnamasta. The Devī bhāgavata-purāṇa does not mention the Mahāvidyās again. At the end of the battle the goddess is named Durgā because she killed the demon Durgama.

There are two important points to note about this version of the origin of the Mahāvidyās. First, they are created to defeat demons and defend the cosmic order, as in version. In this sense they function like the avatāras of Viṣṇu. They are forms of the Mahādevī created for a specific purpose. Second, they are mentioned along with other groups of goddesses: the Guhya-kālīs, who are said to number ten thousand, and two other groups, numbering thirty-two and sixty-four. The group of sixty-four may allude to the sixty-four Yoginīs. According to the text, the goddesses (called Mahādevī, Maheśvarī, Satāksī, Śākambharī, and Durgā, among other names) has many forms and multiplies herself as needs arise. In the Devī-bhāgavata-purāṇa this is a very common theme. Throughout this treatise on goddess mythology and philosophy, a central theme is the overarching reality of the Mahādevī, the highest principle in the universe, indeed, the universe itself. According to this text, she manifests herself in many female forms, and all goddesses are manifestations of her. [35]

Summing Up

Having reviewed these five versions of the origin of the Mahāvidyās, we can now draw some general conclusions about what they tell us about these goddesses.

The Mahāvidyās are related to Śiva: The goddesses from whom the Mahāvidyās are created are usually associated with Śiva as his spouses. The first three versions feature Satī, Pārvatī and Kālī as his wife or consort. Several of the individual Mahāvidyās. It is observed as above mentioned strong associations with Śiva, reinforcing this point (Plates 21 and 29)

Śiva is subordinate to the goddesses: In versions A to C as systematized alphabe tically above A, B.... E the Mahāvidyās limit, frighten, or control Śiva. Indeed, this is the reason they were created in these three versions. The Mahāvidyās demonstrate the superior might of the goddess in question, her ability to overpower Śiva. Versions A-C, that is emphasize the superiority of the goddess to Śiva. A common theme in Śākta theology and in many tantric texts as well, is that Śiva is ultimately dependent upon Śakti. This theme is succinctly and vividly expressed in the well known saying, "Śiva is a mere *śava* (corpse) without Śakti." This theme of Śiva's dependence upon Śakti is perhaps expressed most clearly in version B, which features Kālī as the source of the Mahāvidyās. In this version, Śiva wishes for independence. He wants to leave Kālī but cannot, because she pervades the cosmos in her various forms, There is nowhere hat she is not. It is impossible to exist apart from her.

The Mahāvidyās are fierce goddesses. The frightening nature of the Mahāvidyās is also attested in most descriptions of individual Mahāvidyās. Kālī, Tārā, Bagalā, Dhūmavatī, and Chinnamastā are nearly always frightening, terrible and fierce. Tripurā-sundarī (Ṣoḍaṣī), Bhairavī, Mātaṇgī and Bhūvanesarī are often said to have fearsome characteristics. Only Kamalā is consistently presented as being. In characterizing tantric religion generally as "more rugged than tender," the scripture on Tantrism explains describing the Mahāvidyās, who in fact features prominently in tantric religion.

The Mahāvidyās are associated with magical powers. All previous versions link the Mahāvidyās to magical, meditative, or yogic powers. Many other texts about the Mahāvidyās emphasize this association, particularly in the case of certain individual Mahāvidyās, such as Bagālamukhī. These powers are often used to control other people, usually adversaries and include the power to bring about whatever one wills, to attract other people to oneself, to immobilize someone or make that person mute, to cause someone to flee, to make other grow old prematurely while remaining young oneself, and to kill someone simply by willing it. The fact that in three versions a goddess is able to control Śiva with the Mahāvidyās reinforces the idea that they are associated with magical or meditative powers. We might say that in these three versions, the goddess in question controls Śiva with her magical or meditative powers.

Male-female tensions and female independence. In above versions the Mahāvidyās emerge against a background of male-female tensions and there may be the implication of such tension in version C as well. This tension arises when the goddess feels abused, ignored or insulted by her father or husband. In version A Satī becomes furious and transforms herself into such a horrible, frightening being that Śiva can barely stand to look at her. The Mahāvidyās are forms of this being, further personifications of Satī's wrath. Version A makes clear and versions B and C imply that the goddess, Śiva's spouse in each case, has a will of her own and is perfectly capable of exercising that will even if it means going against her husband or father. The point cannot be missed in version A Satī is not content to remain a passive, obedient, submissive wife if she is sufficiently provoked. She contains aspecs and powers that easily overwhelm and frighten her husband.

The fact that the individual Mahāvidyās are not submissive consorts of male deities reinforce the emphasis in versions A to C that the goddess is an independent being. Most of the individual Mahāvidyās are not depicted with a male consort and when they are, as in the case of Kālī, Tārā, and Tripurā-sundarī for example they dominate him (both Kālī and Tārā are shown standing on the supine body of Śiva, while Tripurā-sundarī is usually shown sitting on him).

World maintenance. Versions A and E differ markedly from above mentioned versions A to C in stressing the world-maintaining function of the Mahāvidyās. VesionsD and F cast the Mahāvidyās in the familiar role of forms of the goddess Durgā or the Mahādevī, created by her to defeat demons who have usurped the position of the gods. The extent to which individual Mahāvidyās are described or featured as world maintainers or demon slayers varies a good deal. Kālī is well known as a demon slayer and is often featured in the role. Others, however, such as Dhūmavatī and Bagalā, are only rarely describe in this capacity. For the most part, with the exception of Kālī, world maintenance is a minor them in stories of the individual Mahāvidyās.

Group versus individual character of the Mahāvidyās. Finally, it is important to note that the Mahāvidyās as a group in these five versions of their origin often function or are described quite differently from the individual Mahāvidyās. As was just noted, the word-maintaining aspect of the Mahāvidyās is stressed in above mentioned versions D and E but figures only weakly in the worship, mythology and symbolism of the individual Mahāvidyās. Version A implies that at the Mahāvidyās are associated with magical powers and that they all create conflict among people. However, the extent to which the individual Mahāvidyās are characterized this way varies a good deal. Bagalāmukhī for example, is strongly associated with these characteristics, but Kamalā hardly at all.

Thus as a group, the Mahāvidyās present a curious collection of goddesses. If there is an internal coherence to the group that explains how its members are related to each other, it is not readily apparent. Neither in textual sources not in the contemporary oral tradition to the inclusion of these ten goddesses in the same group. There are hints in some texts, and some of my informants have speculated about the question. These hints and specification cover a wide range of possibilities.

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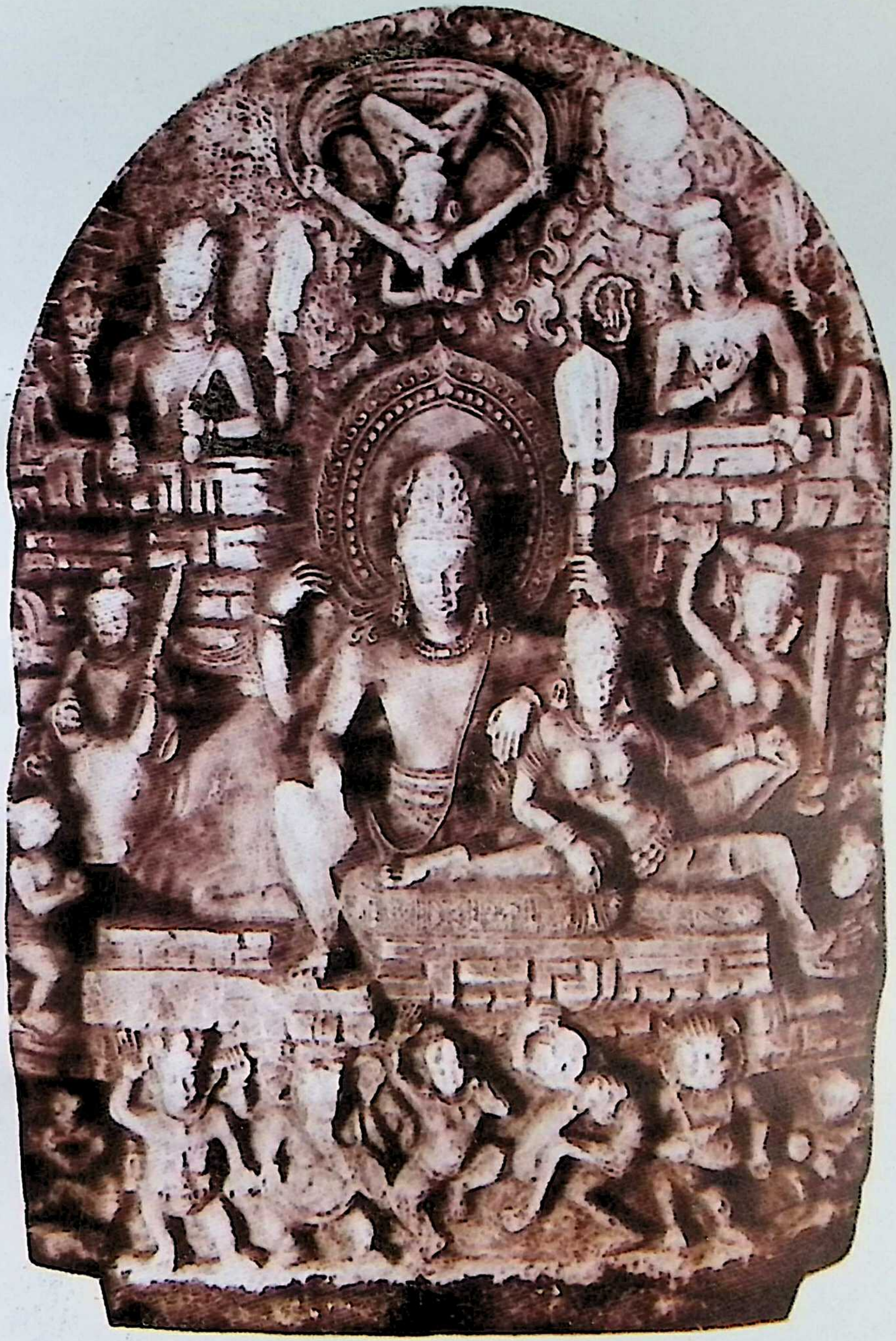
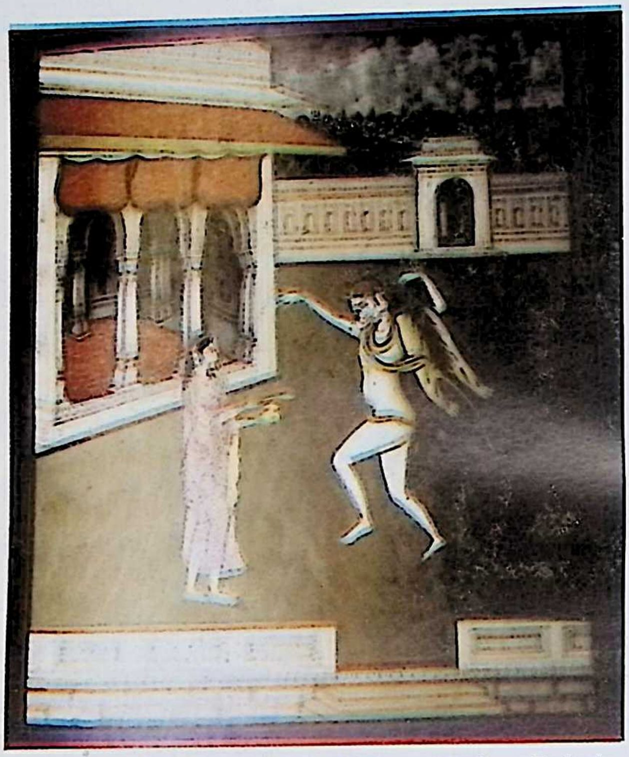
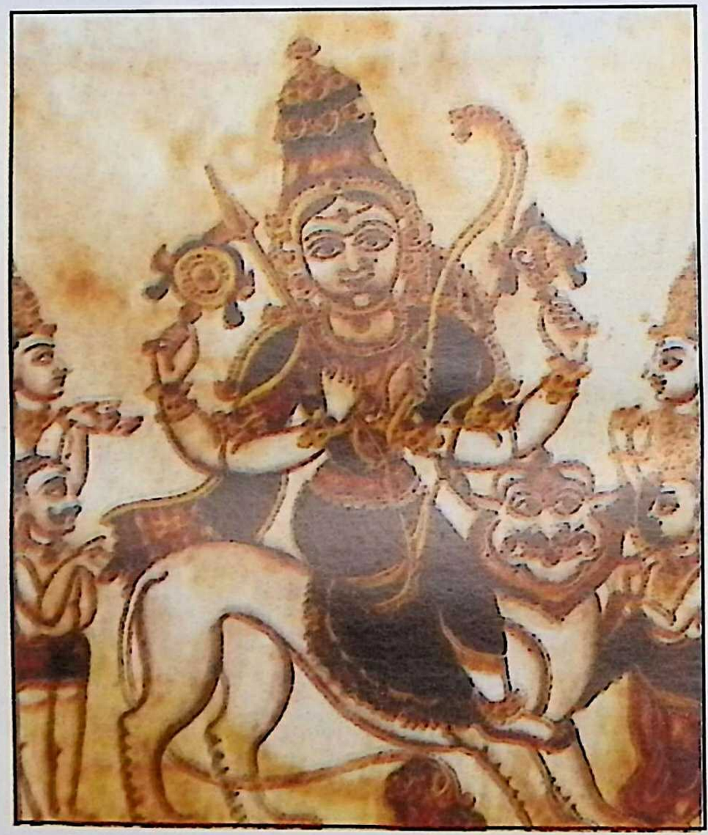
PLATES



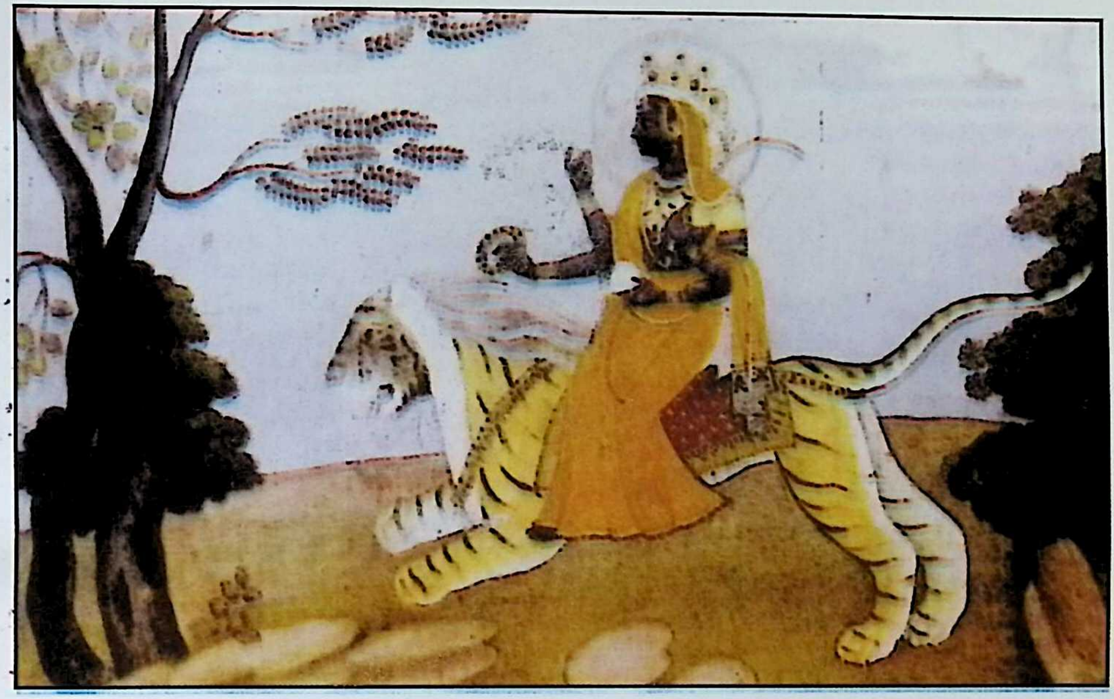
Pl. 1: **Umā Maheśvara** with Nandī bull flanked by various gaṇas Kumbheśvara Tank, Patan circa Ninth century, stone Sculpture.



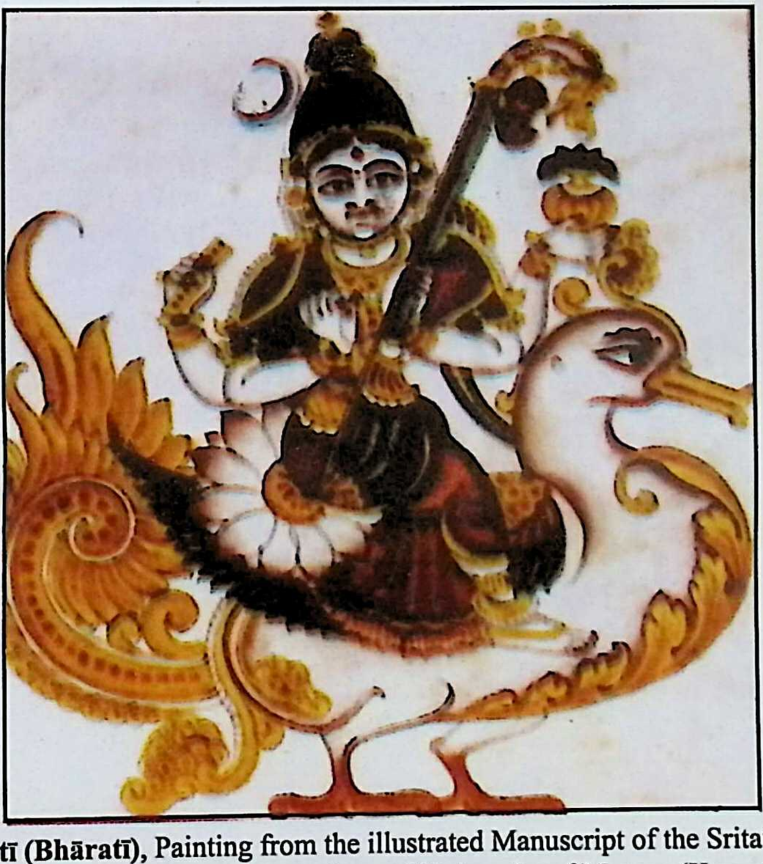
Pl. 2: **Annapurṇā**, Rich in food. An aspect of Pārvatī Pāharī Painting from kangra, preserved in Government museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



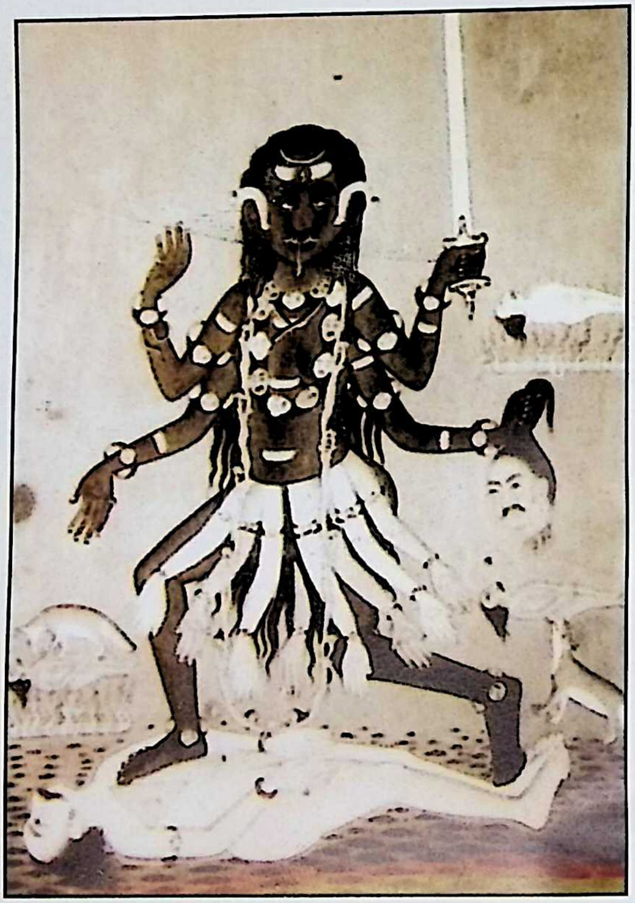
Pl. 3: **Durgā**, Painting from the illustrated Manuscript of the Srī Tattvanidhi, preserved in the oriented Research Institutes of the university of Mysore, Karnataka.



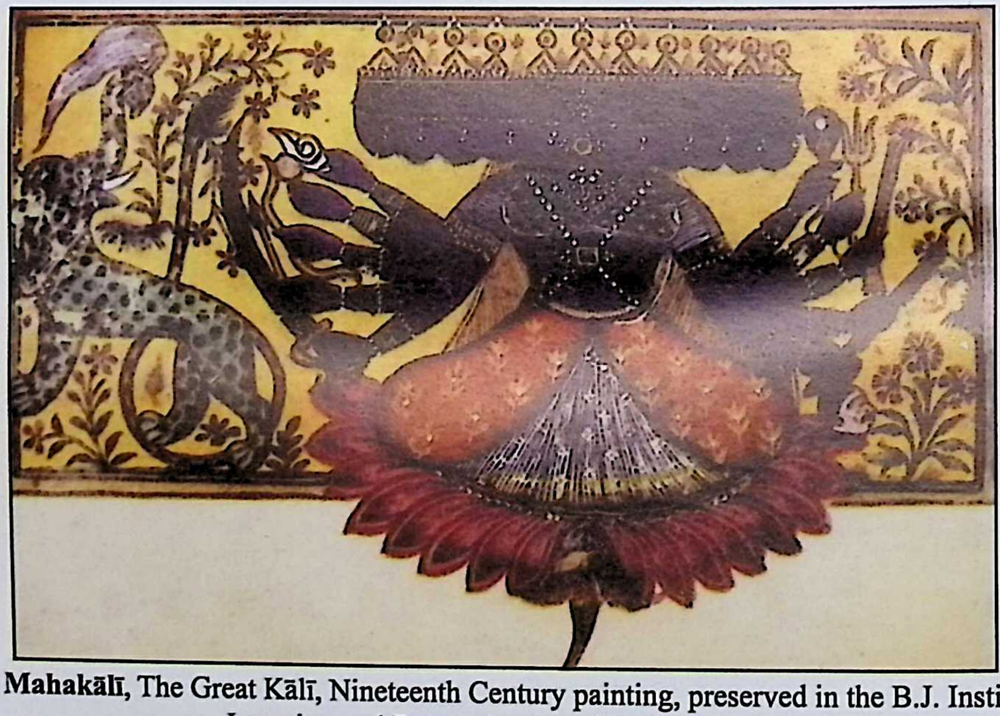
Pl. 4: **Durgā,** Nineteenth Century, Pāharī Painting from Guler reproduced from Bharany.



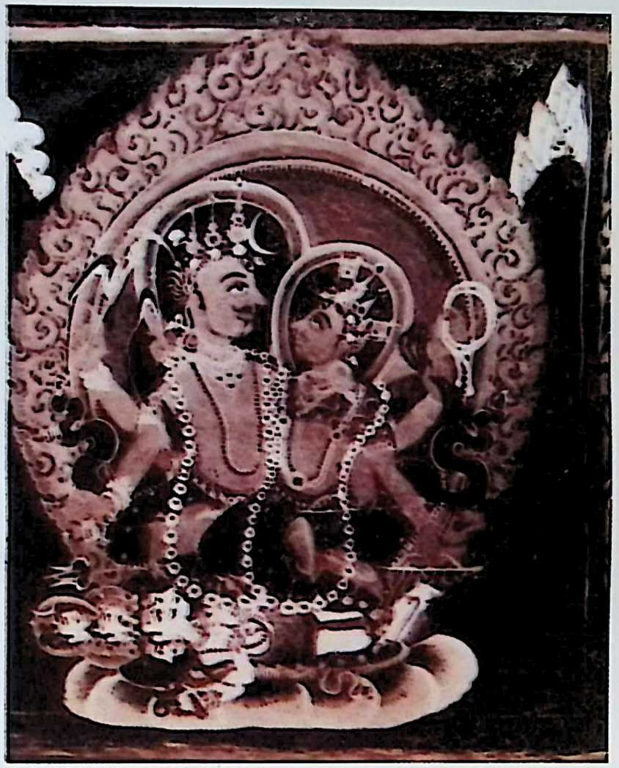
Pl. 5: **Sarasvatī (Bhāratī),** Painting from the illustrated Manuscript of the Sritattvanidhi, preserved in the oriental Research Institute of University of Mysore (Karnataka).



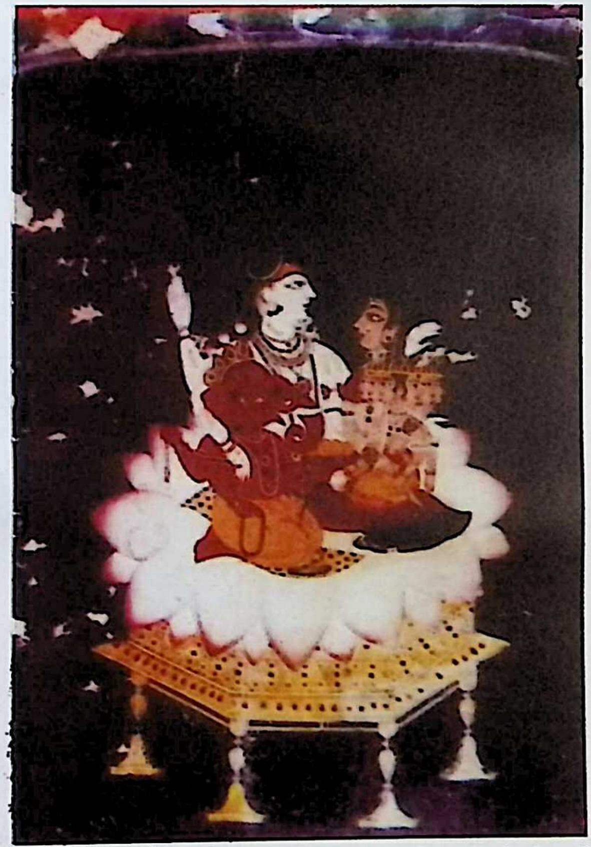
Pl. 6: **Kālī** (Daksiṇa Kālī, Śyāmā, The dark one Pāharī Painting from Mandi (Himachal Pradesh) circa 1700, Preserved in National Museum, New Delhi.



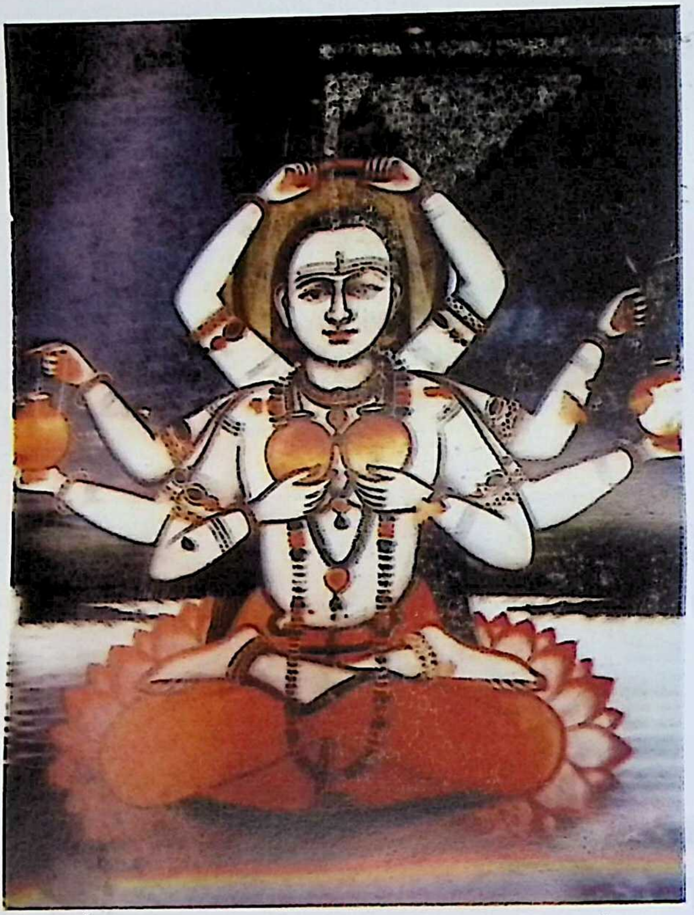
Pl. 7: **Mahakālī**, The Great Kālī, Nineteenth Century painting, preserved in the B.J. Institute of Learning and Research, Ahmadabad (Gujrat).



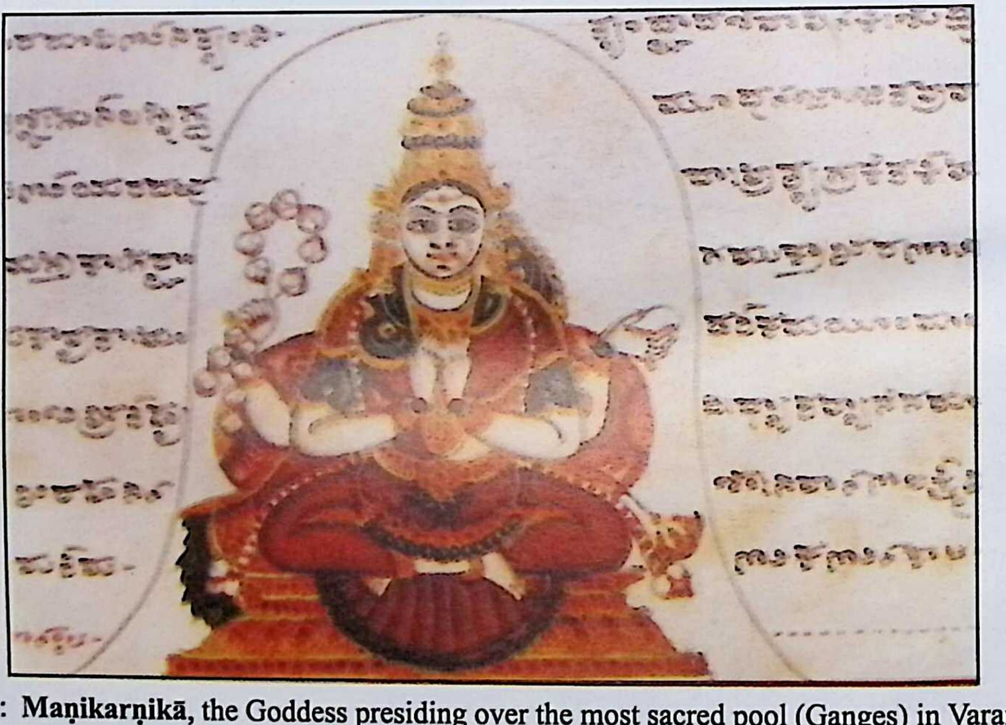
Pl. 8: **Kāmeśvarī** Consort of Kāmadeva (Ṣoḍaṣī) Paining of Kāmeśvarī (Ṣoḍaṣī) and Kāmeśvara from Nepal, preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan Varanasi Circa. 1765 AD, Photo courtesy of American Institute of Indian Studies Gurgaon (Haryana).



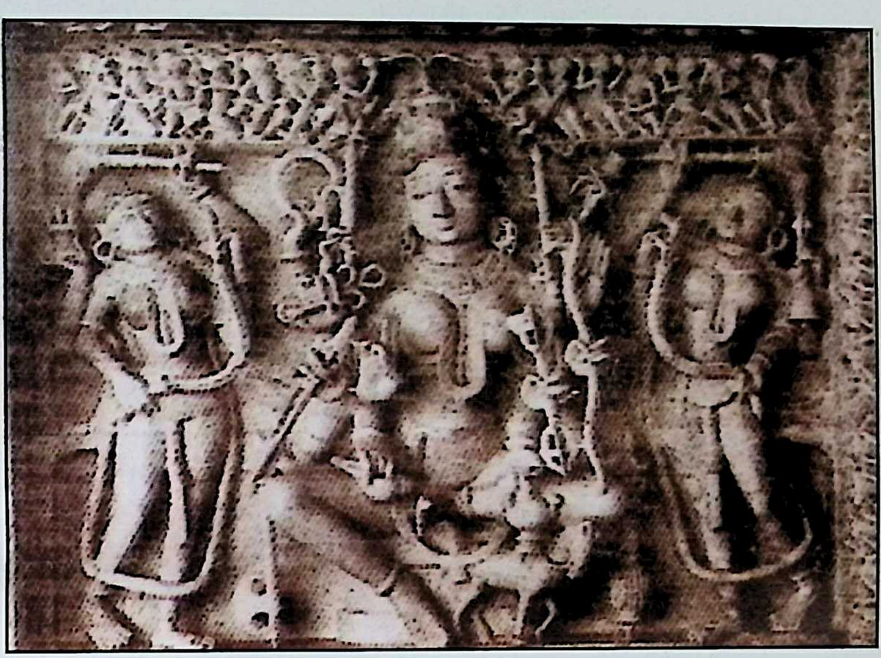
Pl. 9: **Nilakanṭha (Maheśavara),** Śiva and his family) Pāharī Painting from Basohli circa 1750 AD Preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.



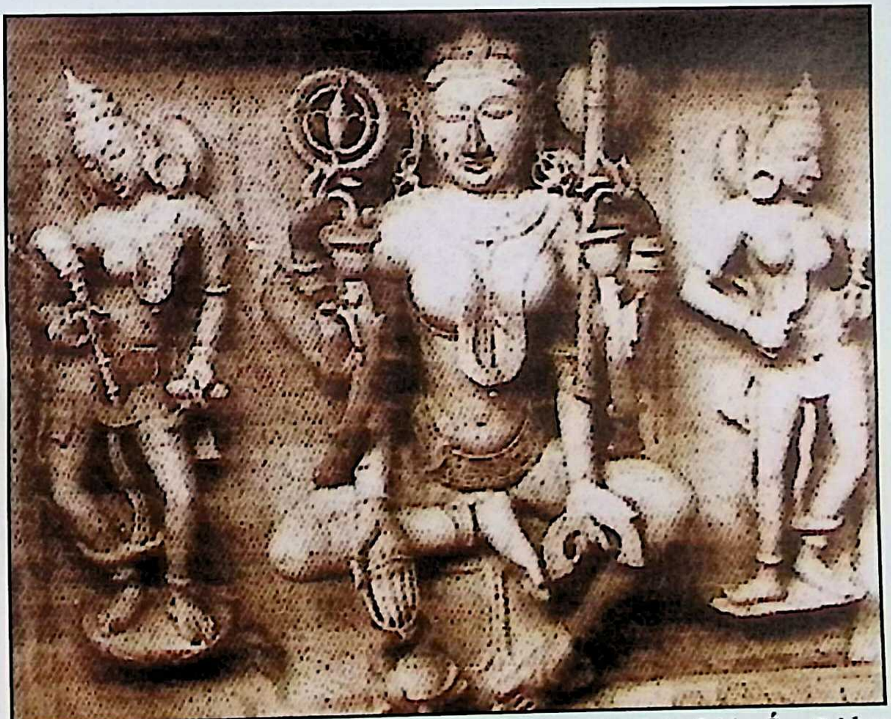
Pl. 10: **Mahāmṛitunjaya Śiva** the Great Conqueror of Death. Circa nineteenth century painting from in old palace Shrine in Parabandar reproduced from Śiva priyanand.



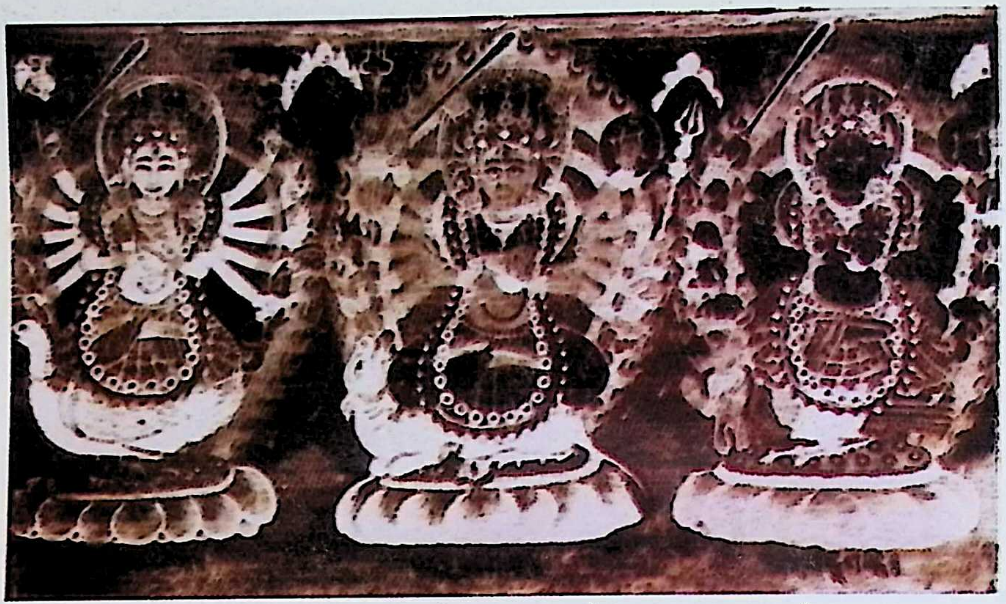
Pl. 11: **Maṇikarṇikā**, the Goddess presiding over the most sacred pool (Ganges) in Varanasi.



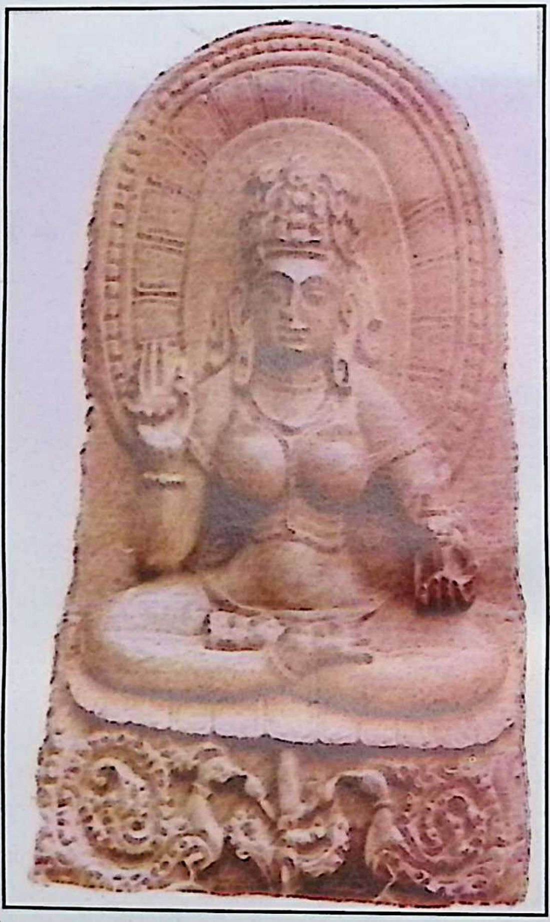
Pl. 12: **Acyaptā** – A sixteen handed Acypta Jain deity seated on horse within jnāna Mudrā, vahana horse sixteen handed having Sankha (Conch) Cakra, Ghaṭā, Paraśu, Hāra, Pāśa Khaḍga, Fourth Sanctum left out, Parasanath Temple, Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Stone sculpture Medieval period.



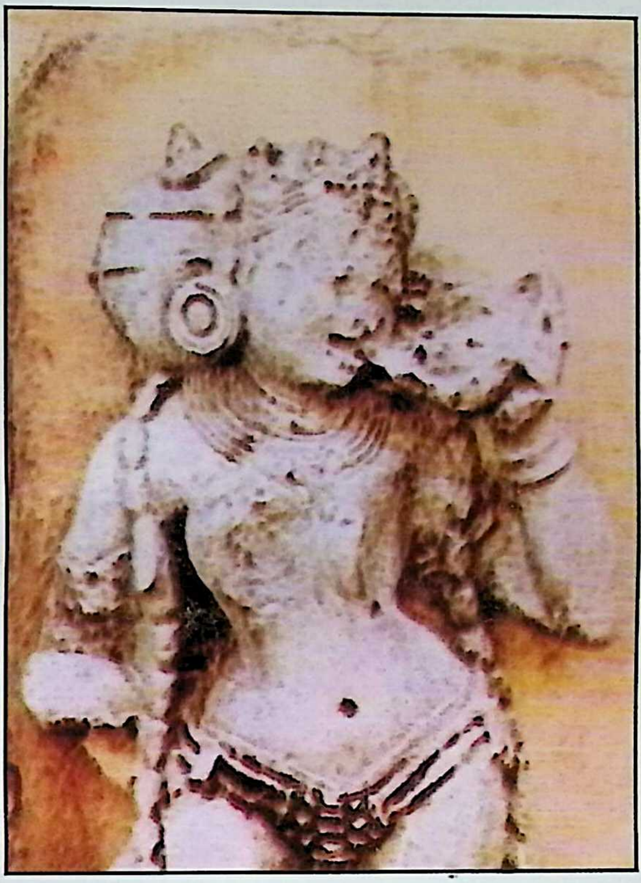
Pl. 13: **Sarasvatī**, Goddess of learning, worshipped by Jain faiths Śvetāmbara. Saraswatī rides on a swan, while Digambar has a peacock. Stone sculpture, Roof Bhamashah Temple, Mount Abu, Medieval Period.



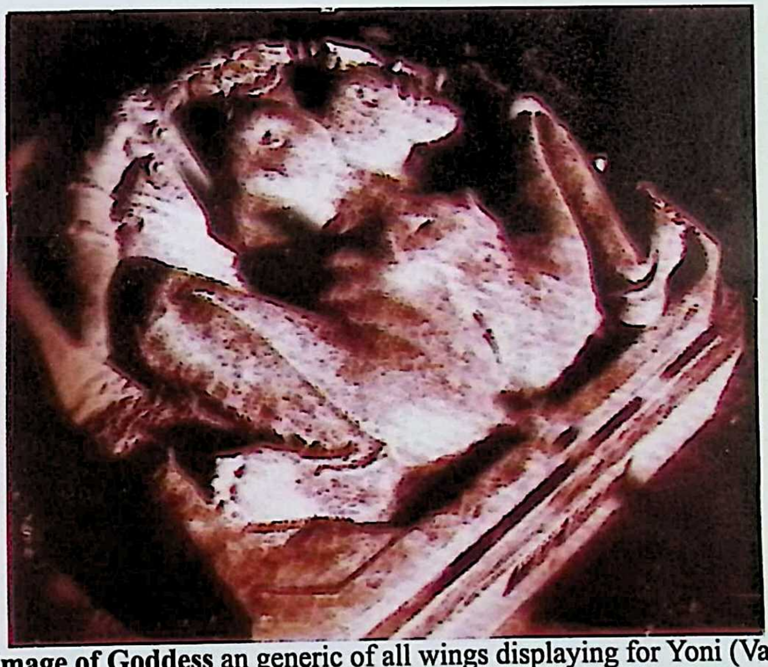
Pl. 14: **Tṛiśakti**, Brahmā, Śakti Rudra Śakti and Viṣṇu –Śakti, Nepal- Bharat Kal Bhavan, Varanasi, Medieval period.



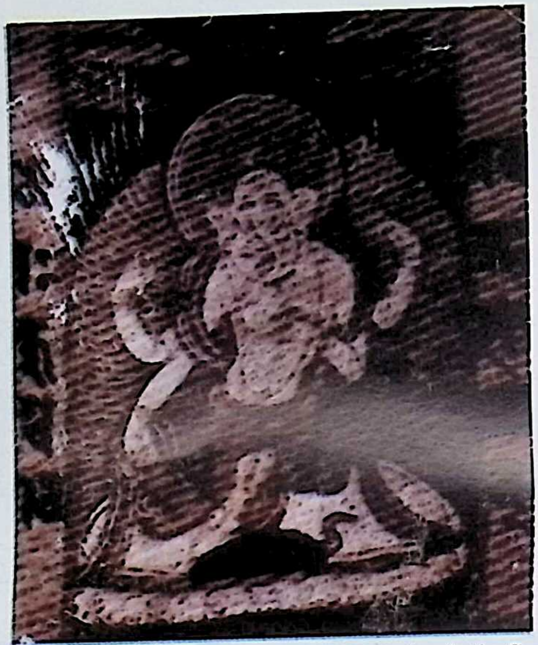
Pl. 15: **Mātṛikā** – Śakti (Cosmic Mother-Goddess) Seated a full lotus in Padmāsana, full of Promise. She holds the conch and Rosary only through Sādhanā will reveal herself, Stone sculpture, Jogeswara Temple, Kumayun. Himalaya Circa 18th Century.



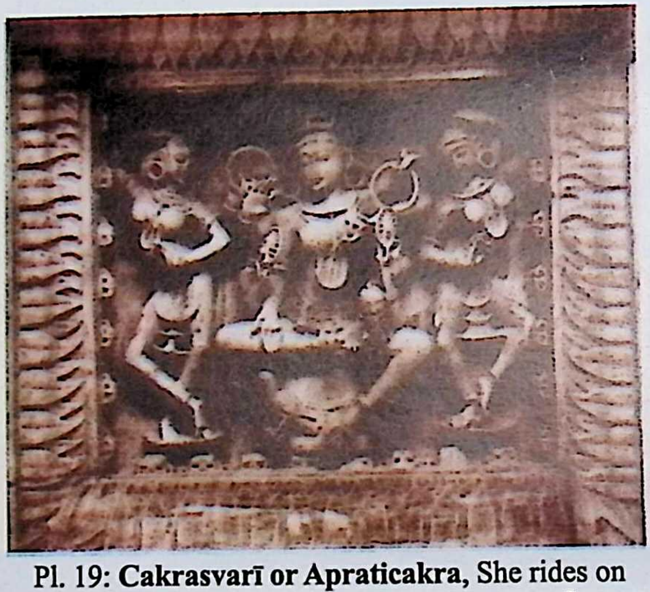
Pl. 16: **Yoginī-Śakti** Drinking from human skull bowl the earliest description of Siddhi endowed yogīs tell of pose, who always carried Skull bowl (Kapālika) as symbol of their supreme vow of total renunciation Śiva and Buddha may both be depicted holding skull bowl, Yoga symbolism, stone sculpture Hirapur circa Tenth century.



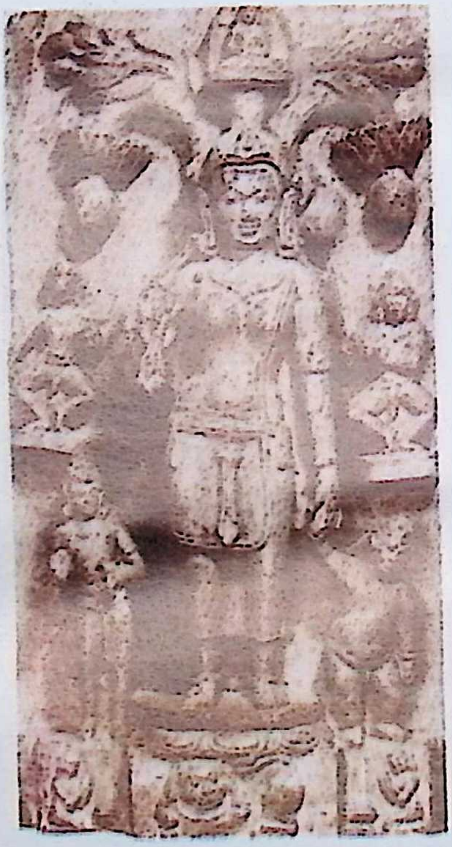
Pl. 17: **Image of Goddess** an generic of all wings displaying for Yoni (Vagina) for worship, stone sculpture, from Hyderabad Temple, Circa eleventh century A.D.



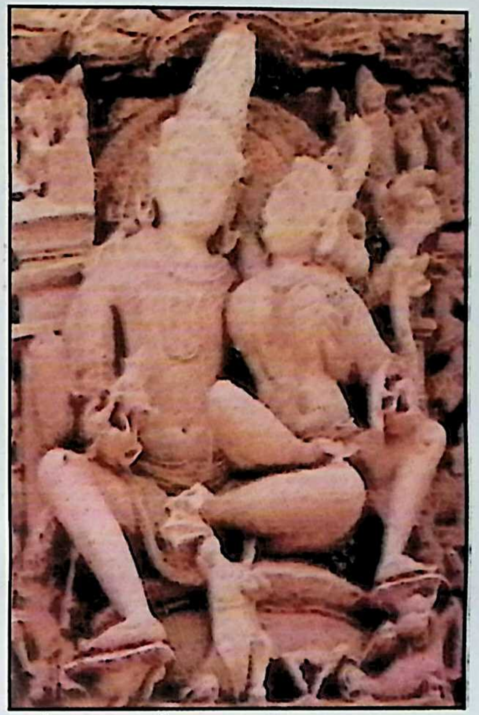
Pl. 18: **Gaṇapatihṛdaya** (Śakti-Gaṇapati) Nepal asiatic Society Calcutta.



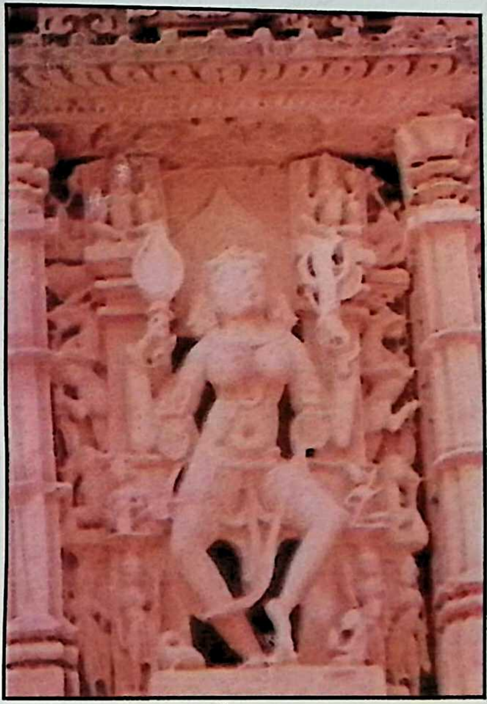
Pl. 19: **Cakrasvarī or Apraticakra**, She rides on Garuḍa and holds cakra on her Characteristic Āyudh. Digambara image have four and twelve lotus on Varada, Cakra, Vyatchyāna, Mudrā, Capra Jnāna Mudrā having plain thing ring as bangles. Roof Vimana Temple, Mount Abu, Later period.



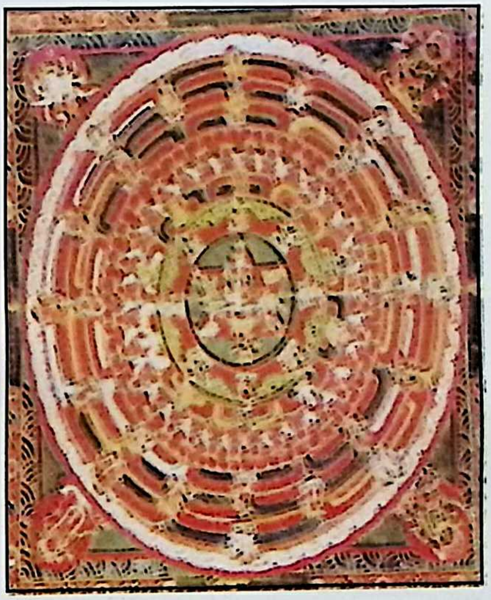
Pl. 20: **Ambikā or Āmra** – Digambara Āmra rides on lion and in the two hands she has bunch of mangoes and a child stone sculpture third sanctum Parasanatha Temple, Later period.



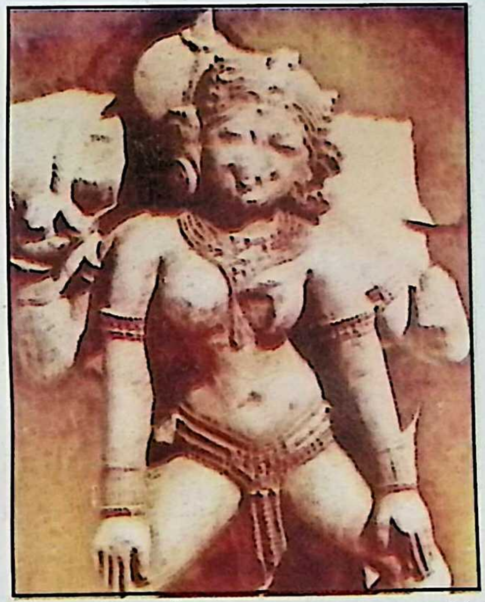
Pl. 21: **Śiva and Śakti** seated upon Bull (Nandī) in the Āsana of a tantric Sādhanā. He holds an erect Serpent and both wear the ornaments of tantric initiative (Lord and lady of universe). God and Goddess Khajuraho, Eleventh Century.



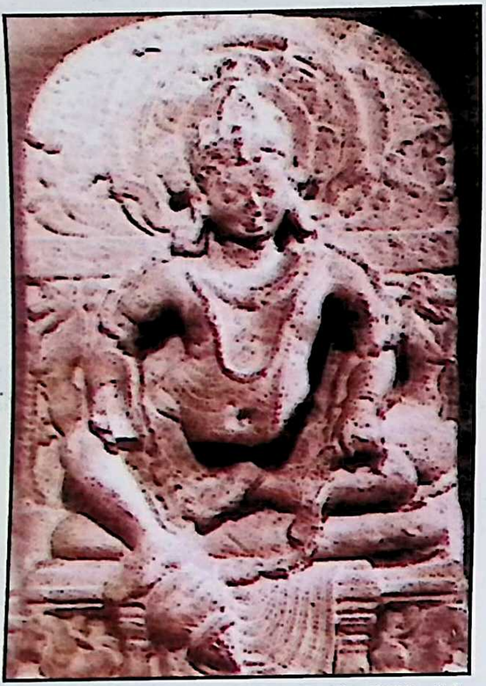
Pl. 22: **Yoginī – Śakti** – She wears the ornament of inititive and by her dance empresses the energy (Śakti) and bliss (Mahāsukh) of reality – Stone Khajuraho circa, eleventh Century.



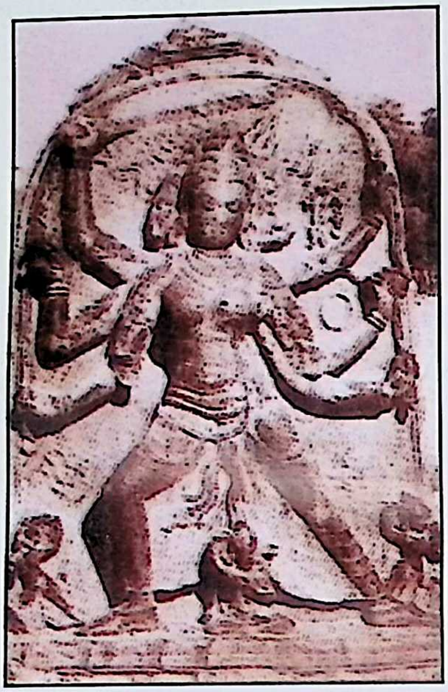
Pl. 23: **Manḍala** – The Yoginī Seats at the center of Manḍala his body coloured red and white representing the two poles to be integrated together by Sādhanā, Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi, Nepalese Manuscript Circa Seventieth Century.



Pl. 24: **Yoginī** – Śakti indance posture with body adorned with five symbolic ornaments crown, Akshobhya, Necklace, Ratna earring, Amitābh, Bracelets, Vairocana and Girdle of initiatiory Mandala. She smiles with joy of bliss fullness (Mahāsukh) and Sounds the Ḍamaru (drum) of cosmic vibration chlorite schist sculpture pala style.

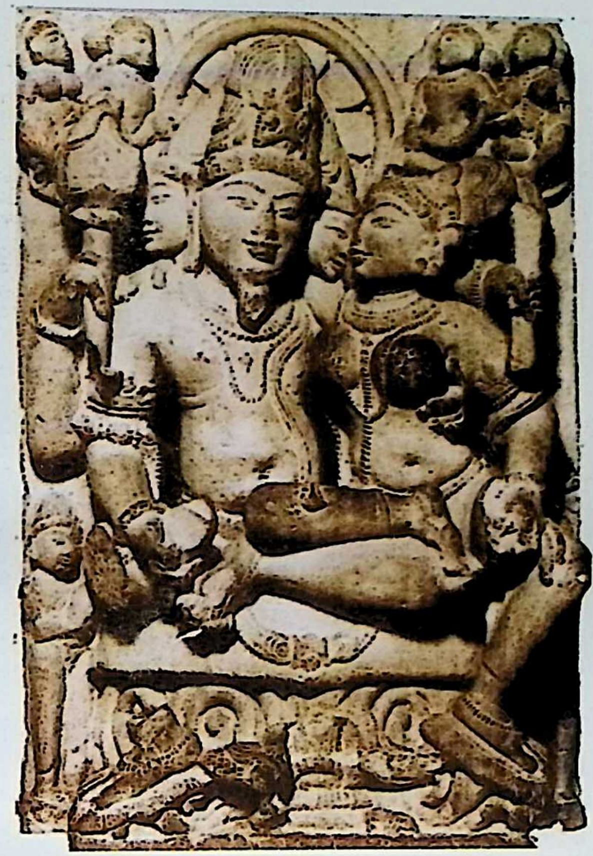


Pl. 25: **Jambhala**, Buddhist God of Wealth in Lalatāsana, Seated on lotus within bowl in one hand with second land lading Nakula vasudharā at his consort. He is just similar to Hindu god Mahākāla: Stone sculpture from Bodhgaya. Patna Museum, Medieval period.

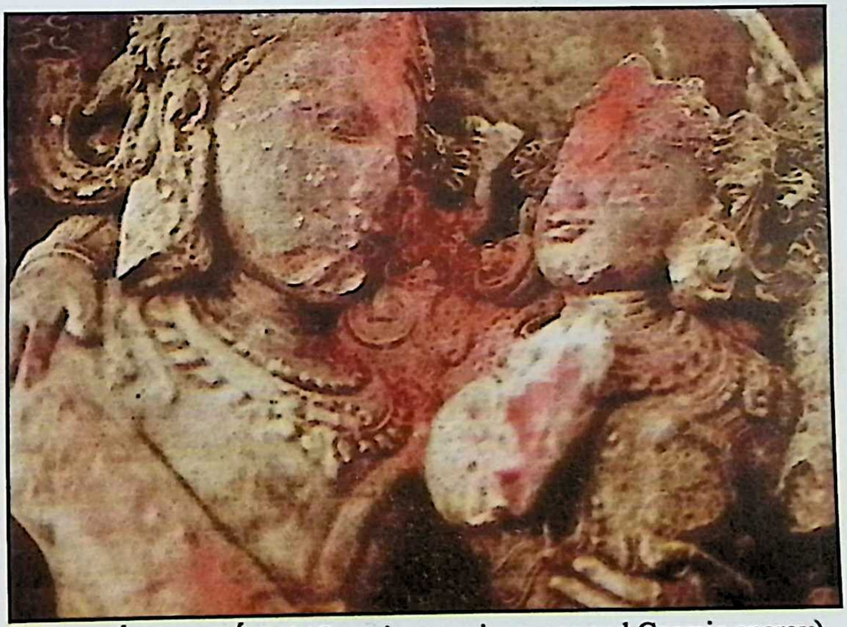


Pl. 27: **Mārīci** – Buddhist goddess emanating from varirocana. She rides in a chariot drawn by seven linga with Rahu whose head only is shown on a goddess without legs on her chariot, eight handed, two hands, kamal (lotus) and armlet stone sculpture, Nalanda Museum, Later Pāla period.

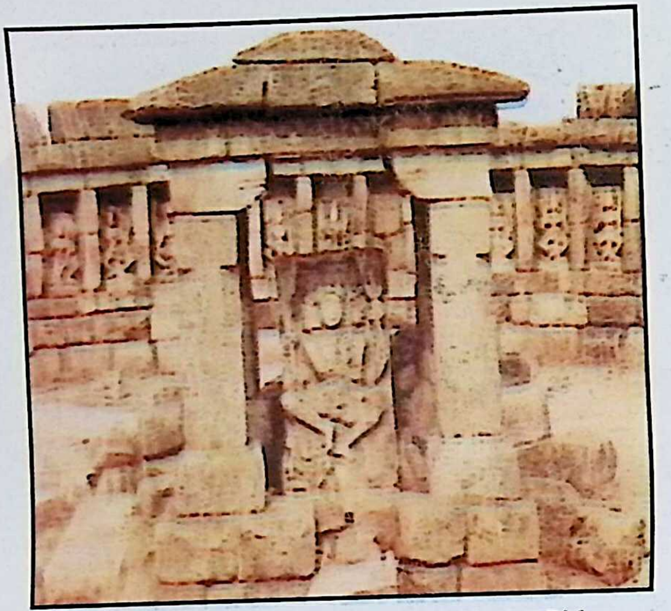
Pl. 26: **Ṣaḍyojata** from of Śiva on Supreme creator. In Pancumukhalinga. He is shown with calm and benedictory face of Pārvatī, mother of creation with navagraha panel stone sculptum, Calcutta Museum, Pre-Medieval period.



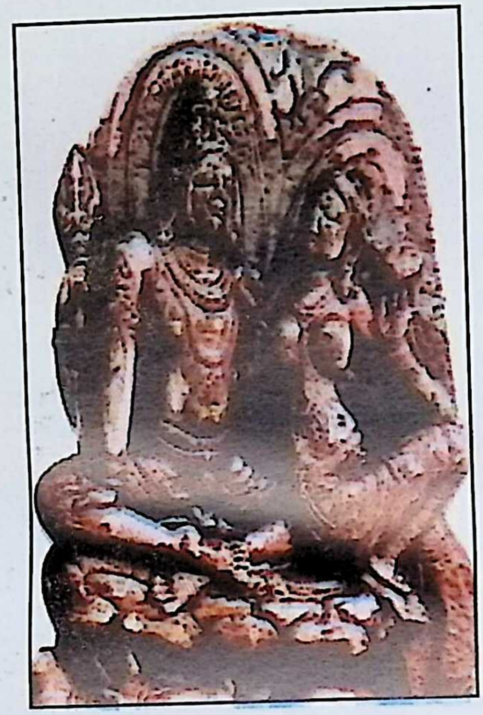
Pl. 28: **Brahmā and Brahmāṇi** – Brahmā in age has been also found with his Śakti, in Brahmāṇi in Ālingana pose. Brahmāṇi has lotus in there left hand, Stone sculpture, Parasnath Temple, Mount Abu (Newalkhā Temple – Later period)



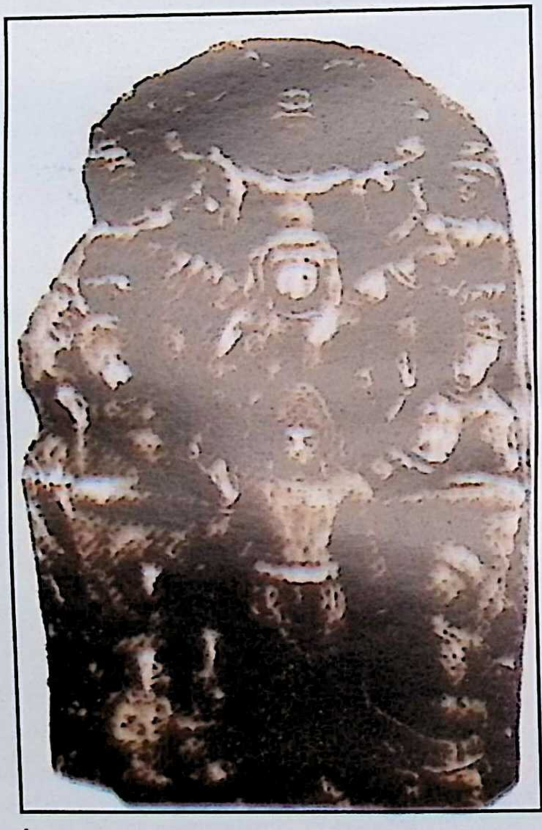
Pl. 29: **Śiva and Śakti** (Cosmic consciousness and Cosmic energy) stone sculpture, vakraśwara pith, Bengal, Pāla Period.



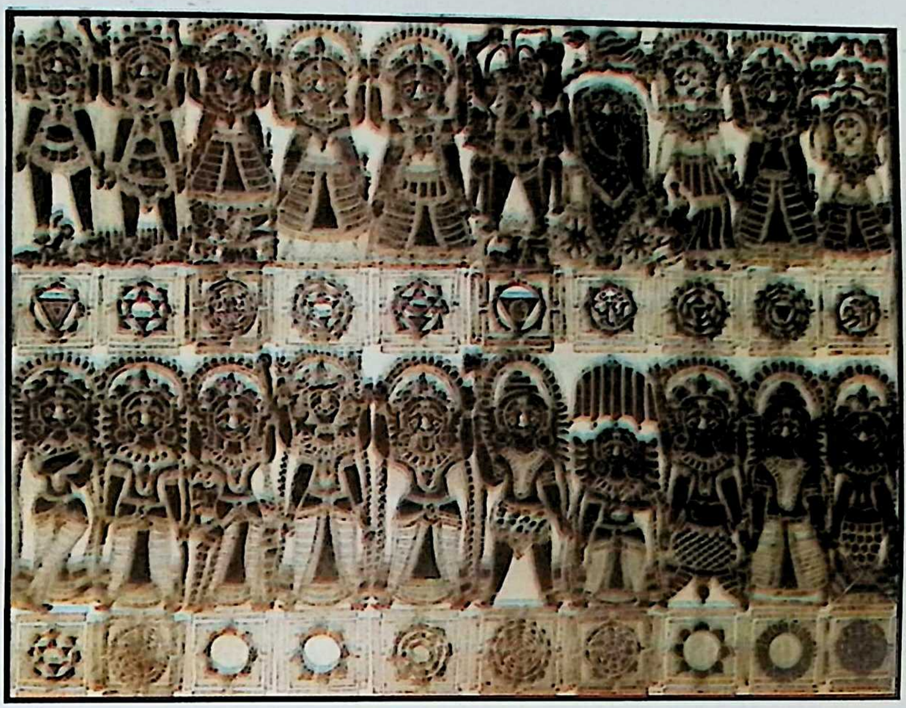
Pl. 30: **Rhānipur- Jharial** – 64 Yoginī Piṭh, Orissa, Eighth Century AD.



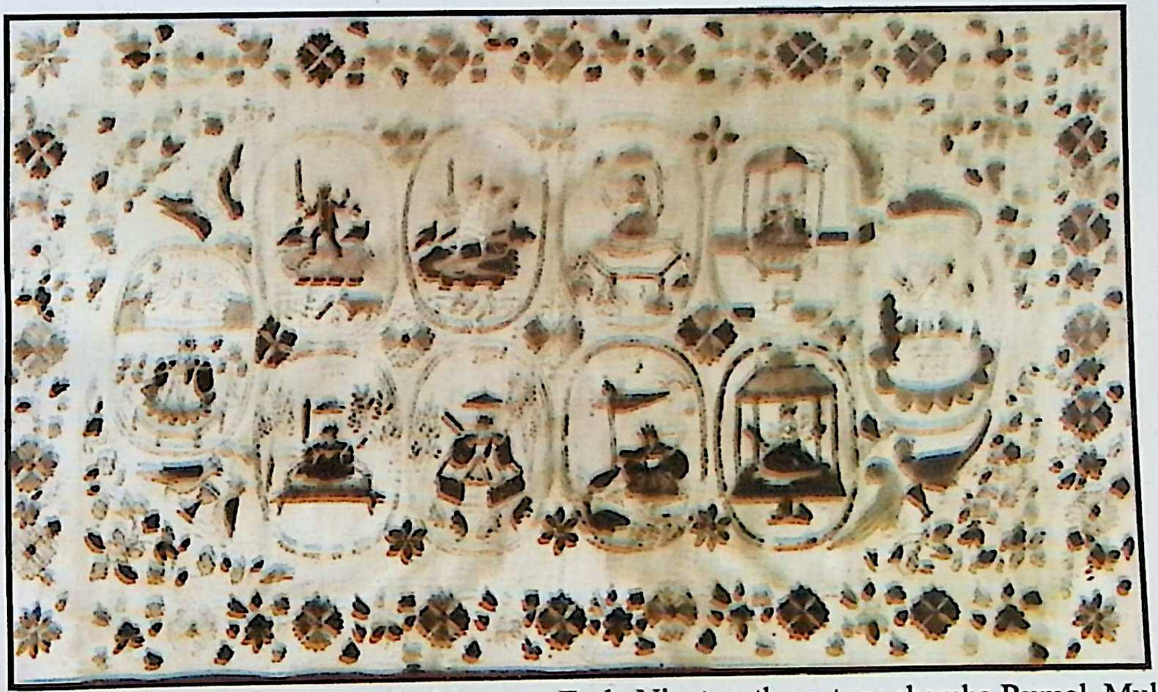
Pl. 31: **Devī of popular tribal art motif** perhaps of forest goddess i.e., vana Devī, Medieval period, stone sculpture Japla village of Palamau district of Jharkhand.



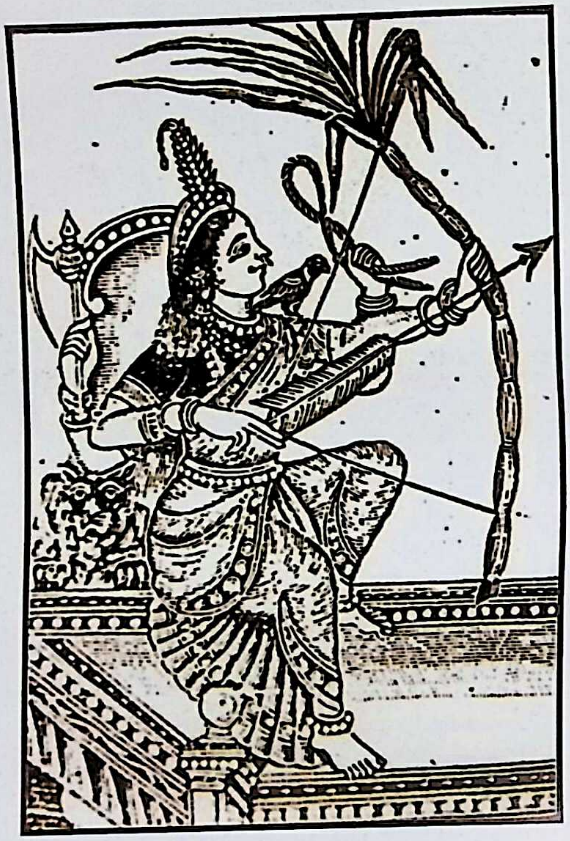
Pl. 32: **Viśvarupa Śiva** (Stone Sculpture), Parel, Bombay, Late Mediaeval period.



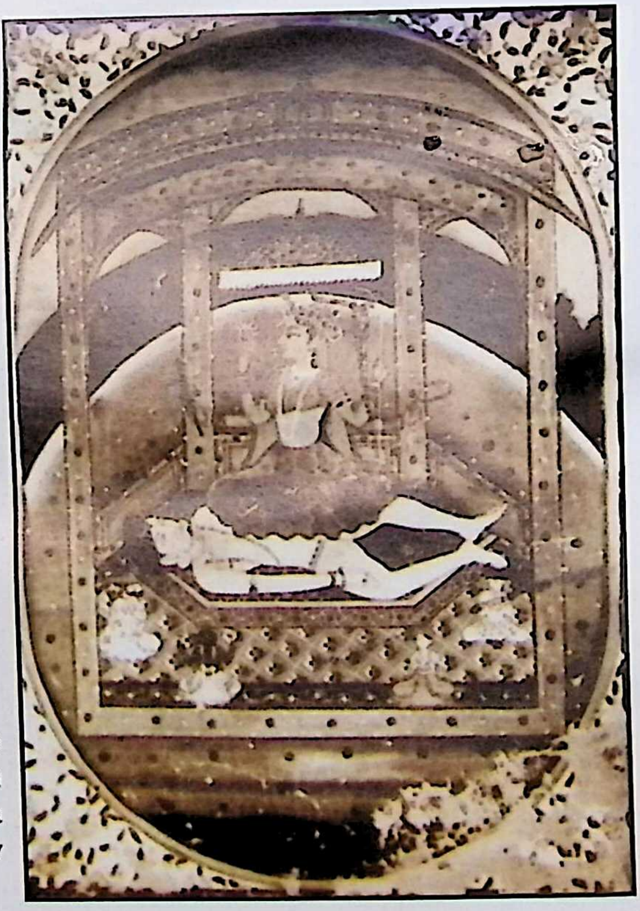
Pl. 33: **The ten Mahāvidyā Goddesses** – Madhubani painting from Mithilā, water colour or paper reproduced. The Goddess are from left to right and with fair corresponding avatāras. (a) Kālī – Kṛṣṇa (b) Tārā – Rāma (c) Ṣoḍaṣī – Kālkī (d) Bhuvneśvarī – Varāha (e) Tripurābhairavī – Nṛsimha (f) Chinaa-masta – Paraśurāma (g) Dhūmavatī – Vamana (h) Bagla Mukhī – Kūrma (i) Mātangī – Buddha (j) Kamalatmika – Matsya.



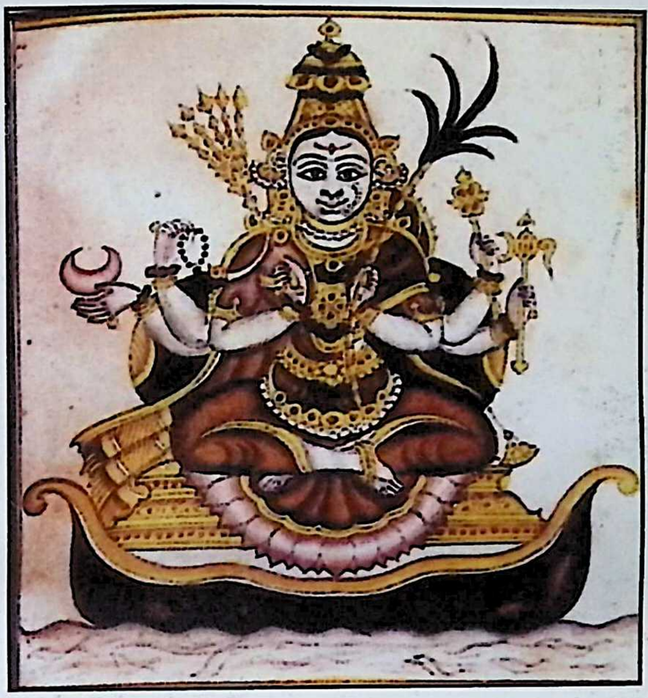
Pl. 34: **The ten Mahāvidyā Goddesses** – Early Nineteenth century chamba Rumal, Multi – coloured silk embroidery on Cotton, preserved in the Los – Angeles counting museum of Art (Gift of Anna Bing Arnold).



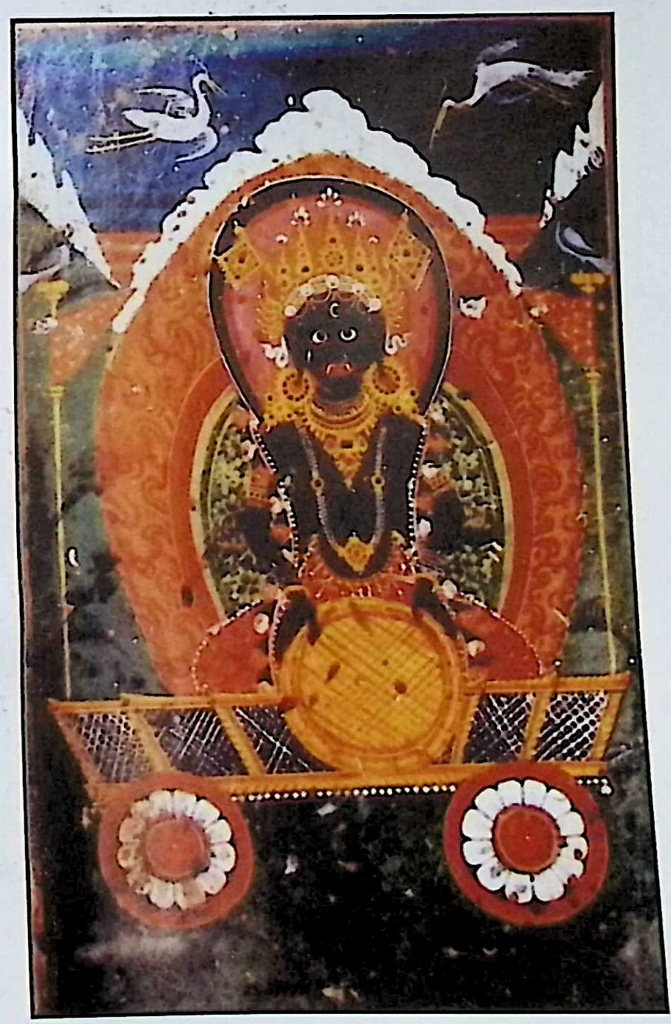
Pl. 35: **Kāmeśvarī,** Consort of Kāmadeva (Ṣoḍaṣī) - Line drawing from Telugu mm.



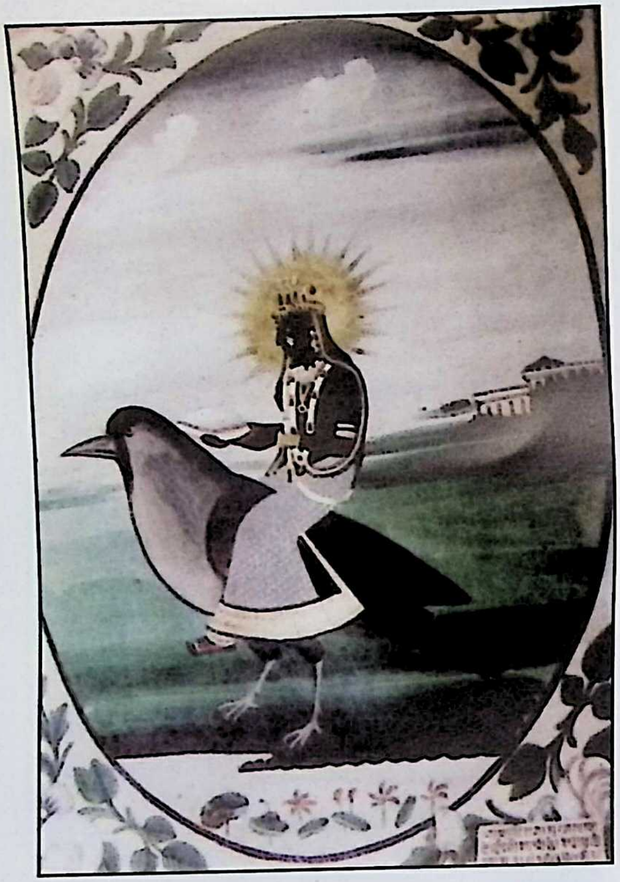
Pl. 36: **Tripurāsundarī (Sṛividyā)** The beautiful women of Tripurā – Late Eighteenth Century Pāharī Painting from Kangra preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi (Ajit Mukerjee collection).



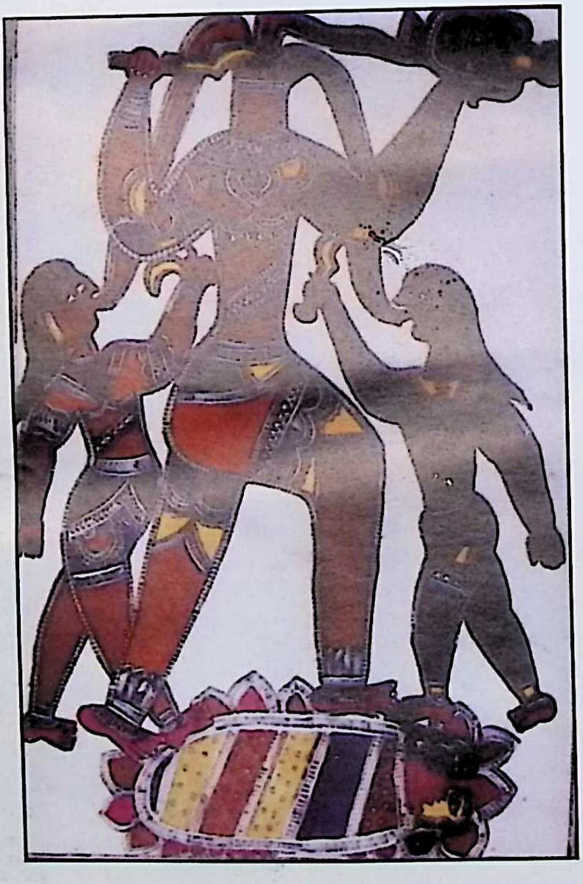
Pl. 37: **Prāṇa Śakti**. The personification of life energy, Painting from the illustrated Manuscript of the Sritattva, Nidhi, preserved in the oriental Research Institute of University of Mysore (Karnataka).



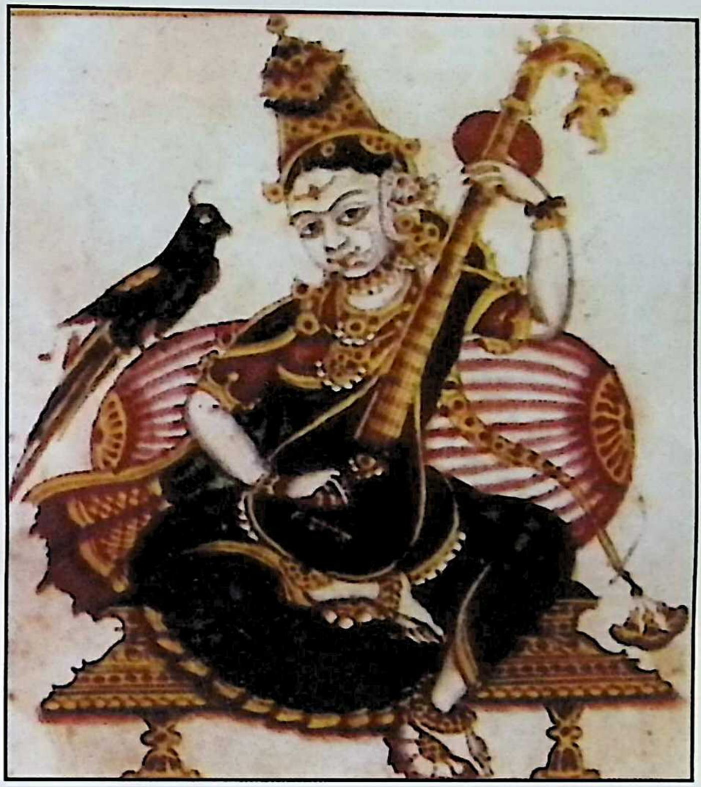
Pl. 38: **Dhūmavatī (Jyeṣṭḥā)** The smoky one, Eighteenth Century painting from Nepal, presented in the collection of J. Zimmerman P Valley, New York, Photo Courtesy of J Zimmerman.



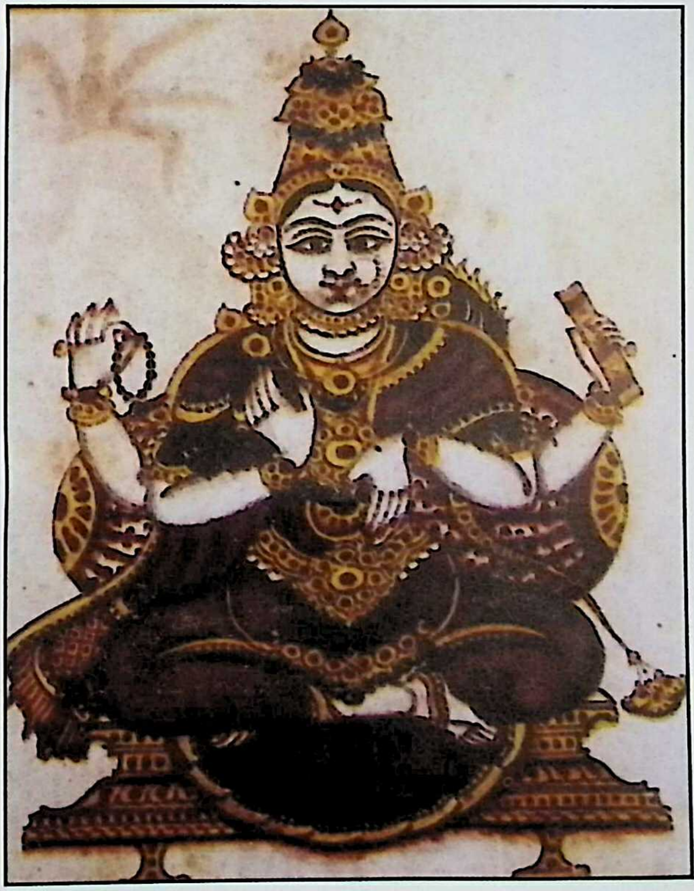
Pl. 39: **Dhūmavatī** (Jyeṣṭḥa – Smokey one), Painting from Jaipur dated 1926, Preserved in the National museum, New Delhi (Ajit Mukerjee Collection.



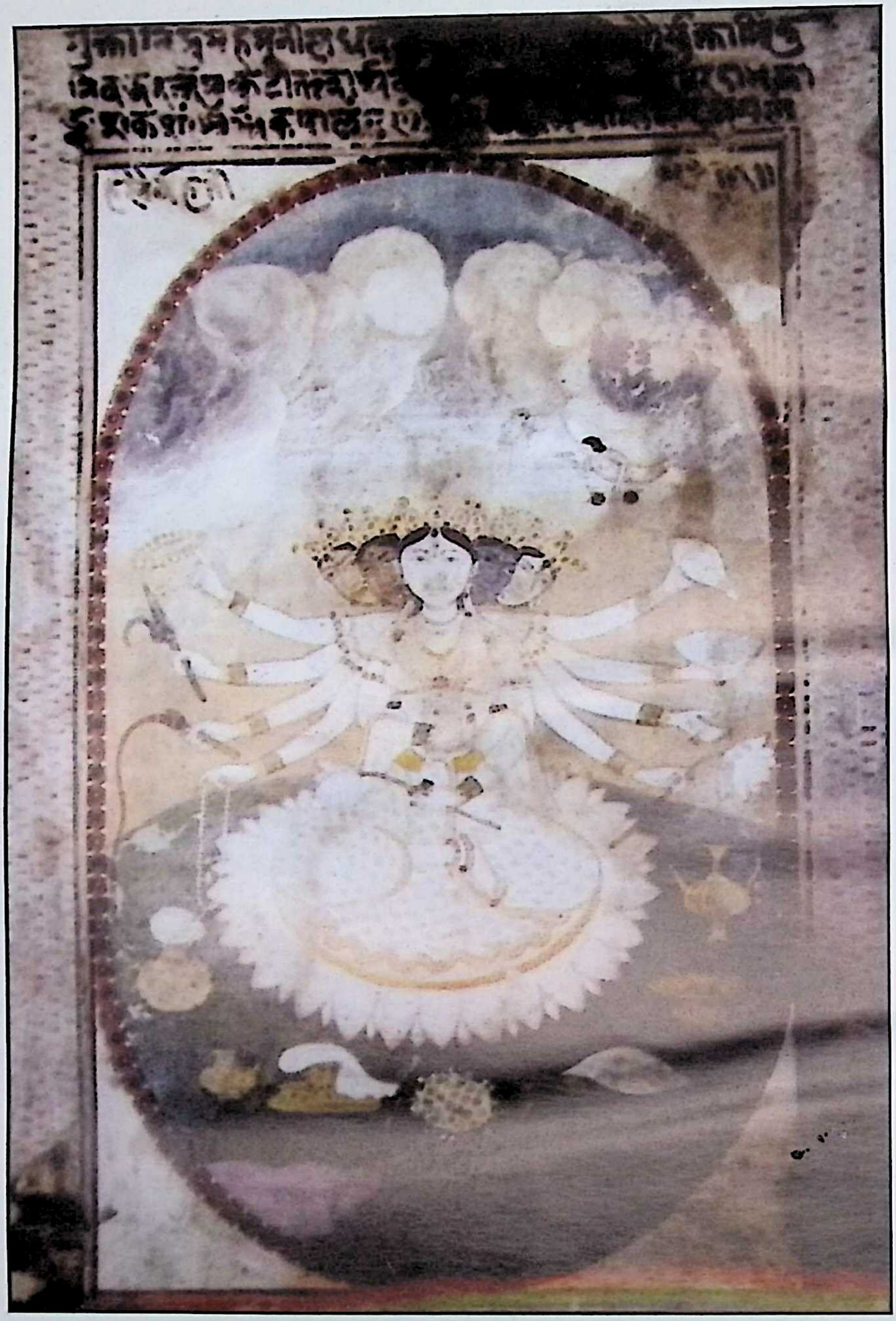
Pl. 40: **Chinamasta,** The Goddess with Severed head Contemporary, Madhubani Painting of Mithilā.



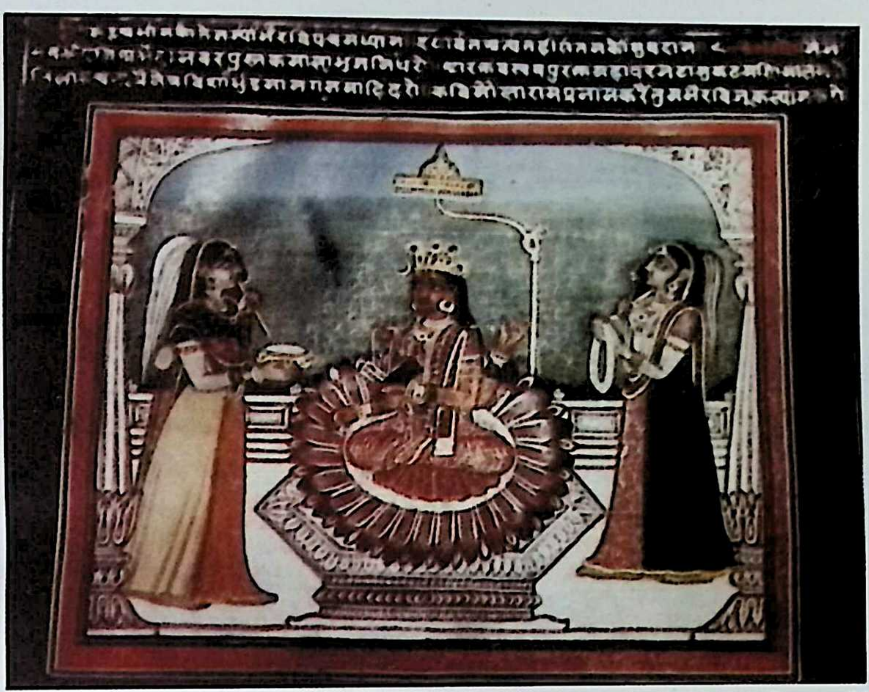
Pl. 41: **Mātangī**, Painting from illustrated manuscript of Śrītatvanidhi, preserved in the oriental Research Institute of University of Mysore (Karnataka).



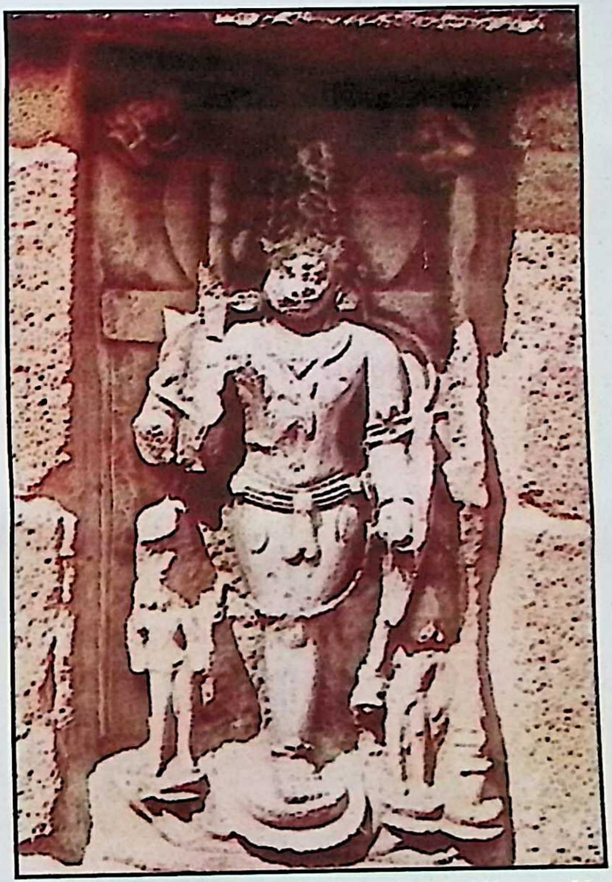
Pl. 42: **Tripurā** (Bālā), Painting from illustrated manuscript of the Sritattvanidhi preserved in the oriental Research of the University of Mysore (Karnataka).



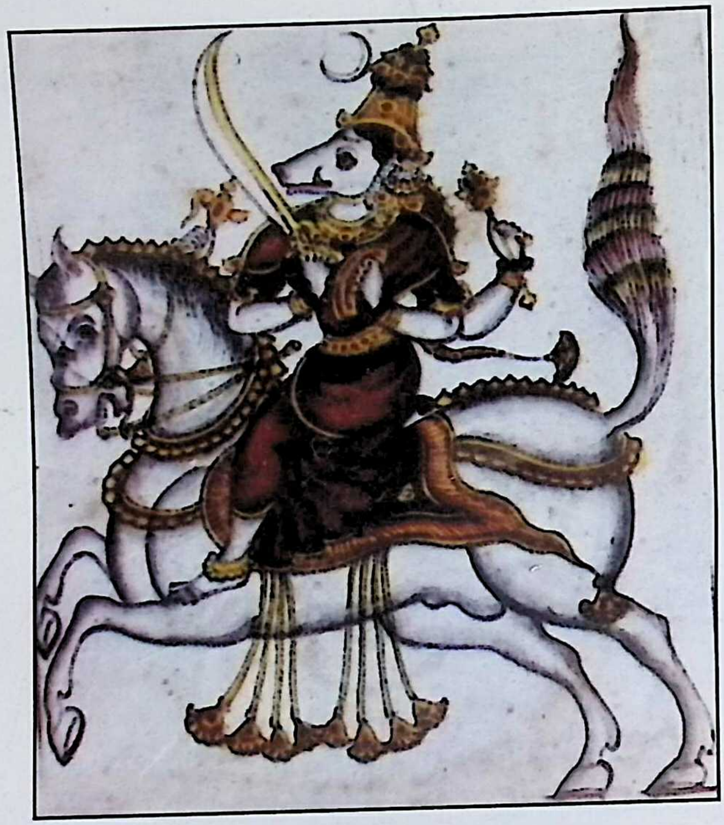
Pl. 43: **Gāyatrī** (Tāriṇī), Late Eighteenth Century Pāharī Painting (Opaque water colour or paper) preserved in the Ross-Coomarasuramy Collection) Museum of Fine Art, Boston).



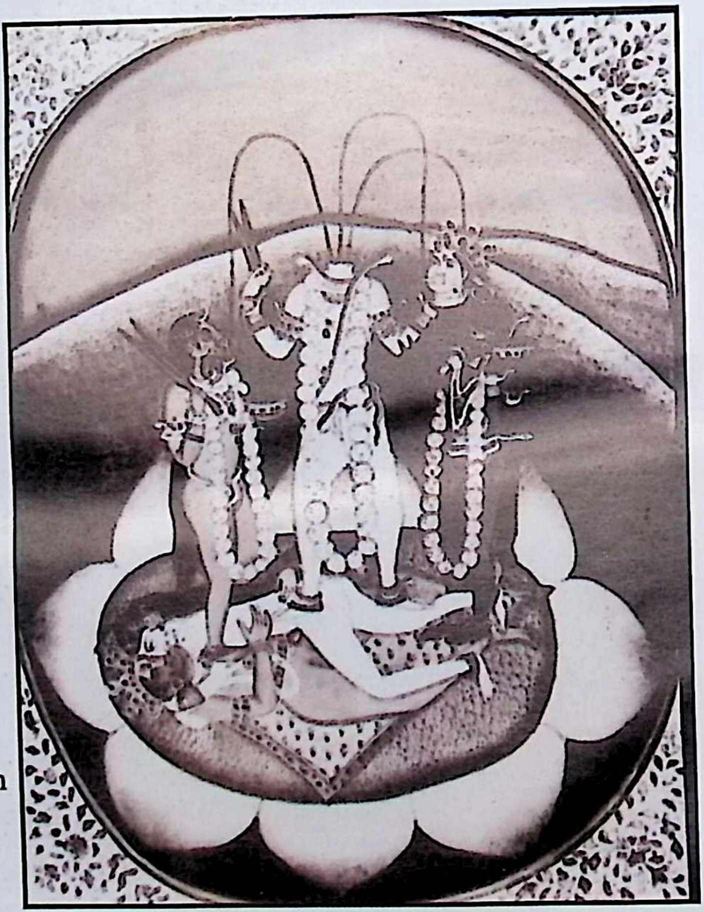
Pl. 44: **Pāharī Painting in the Mahāvidyā** Series by the poet-painting Mala Ram of Srinagar (Garhwal), Circa 1811, Preserved in Bharat Kala Bhawan Varanasi.



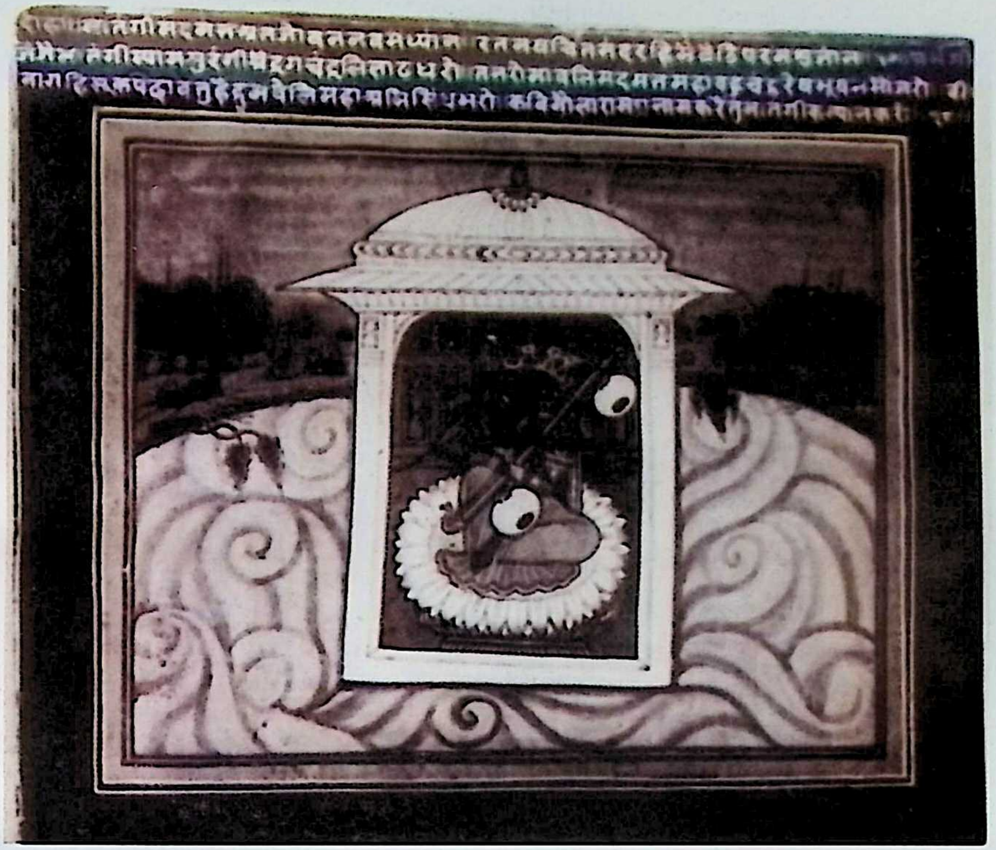
Pl. 45: **Ajaikapada Bhairava** (Caṇḍī-Maṇḍapa), Hirapur Yoginī-piṭh, Stone Sculpture, Pala period.



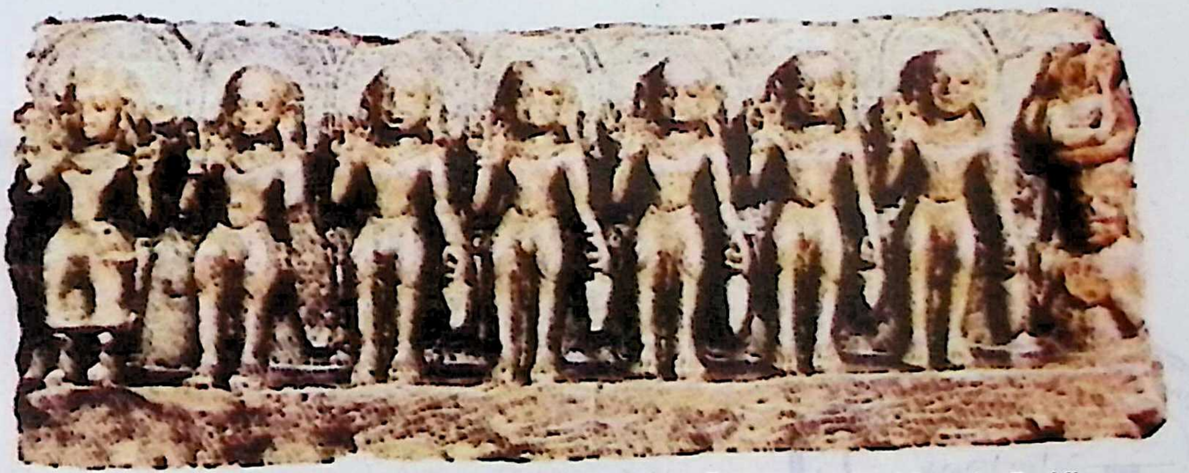
Pl. 46: **Svapna** – Varāhī, Varāha's female counterpart, who speaks painting from the illustrated Manuscript *Śrītattavanidhi*, preserved in the Oriental Research Institute of the University of Mysore (Karnataka).



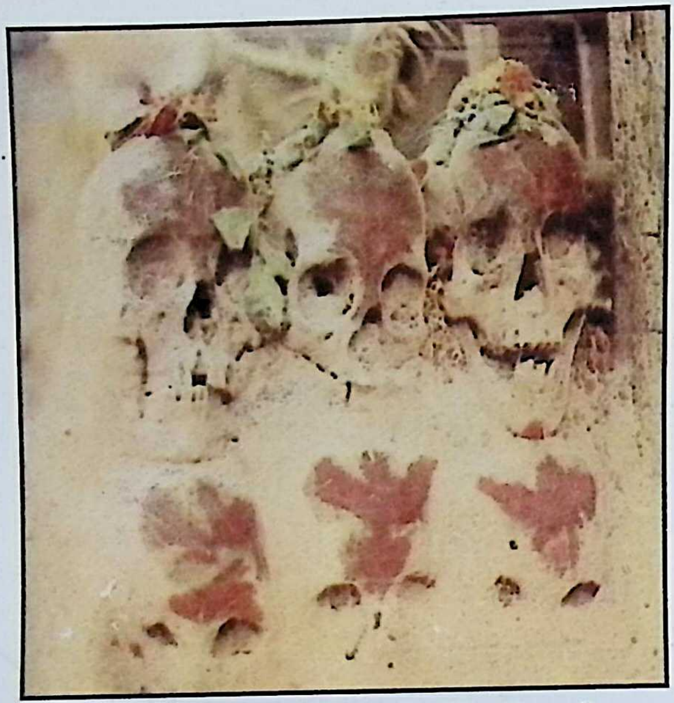
Pl. 47: **Chinnamasta** – The Goddess with the Served head Pāharī Painting from Kangra, Circa 1810, preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.



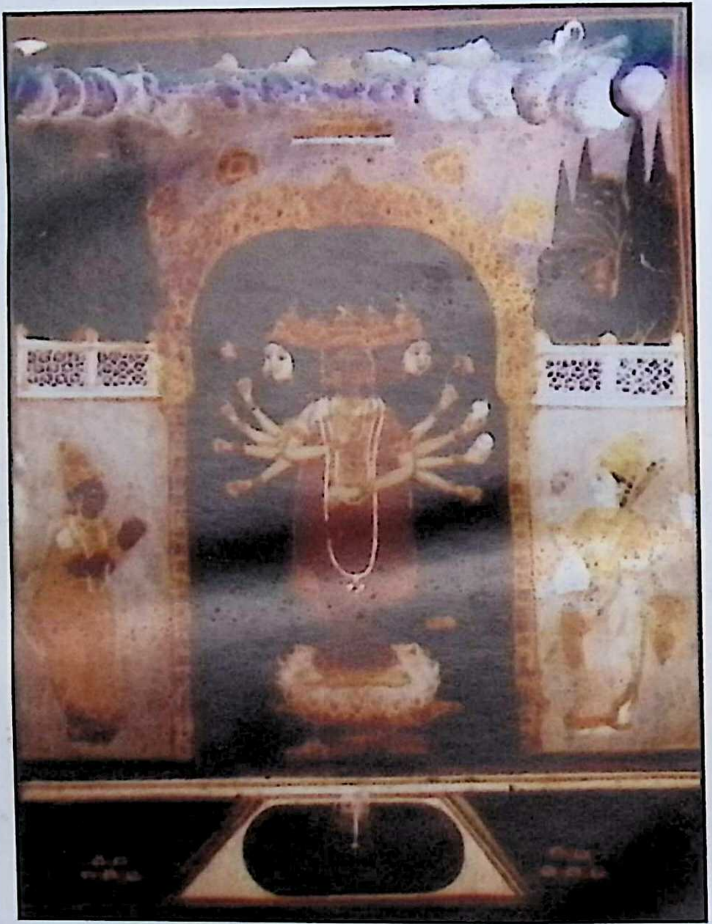
Pl. 48: Mātangī – Pāharī Painting in Mahāvidyā series by poet-painter mola Rāma of Srinagar (Garhwal) Circa 1811, preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi.



Pl. 49: Navagṛaha – The Nine Plannrts. Nine planets – Āditya, Candra, Mangala, Buddha, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Śani-Rāhu and Ketu (Ascending and Descending Modes) Jogesvara, Kumaon (Himalaya) Medieval period).



Pl. 50: Skull Alter – Tārāpiṭh, (West Bengal).



Pl. 51: Gāyatrī (Tārīṇi), Painting from Mysore, preserved in Delhi, National Museum Circa 1800 AD.

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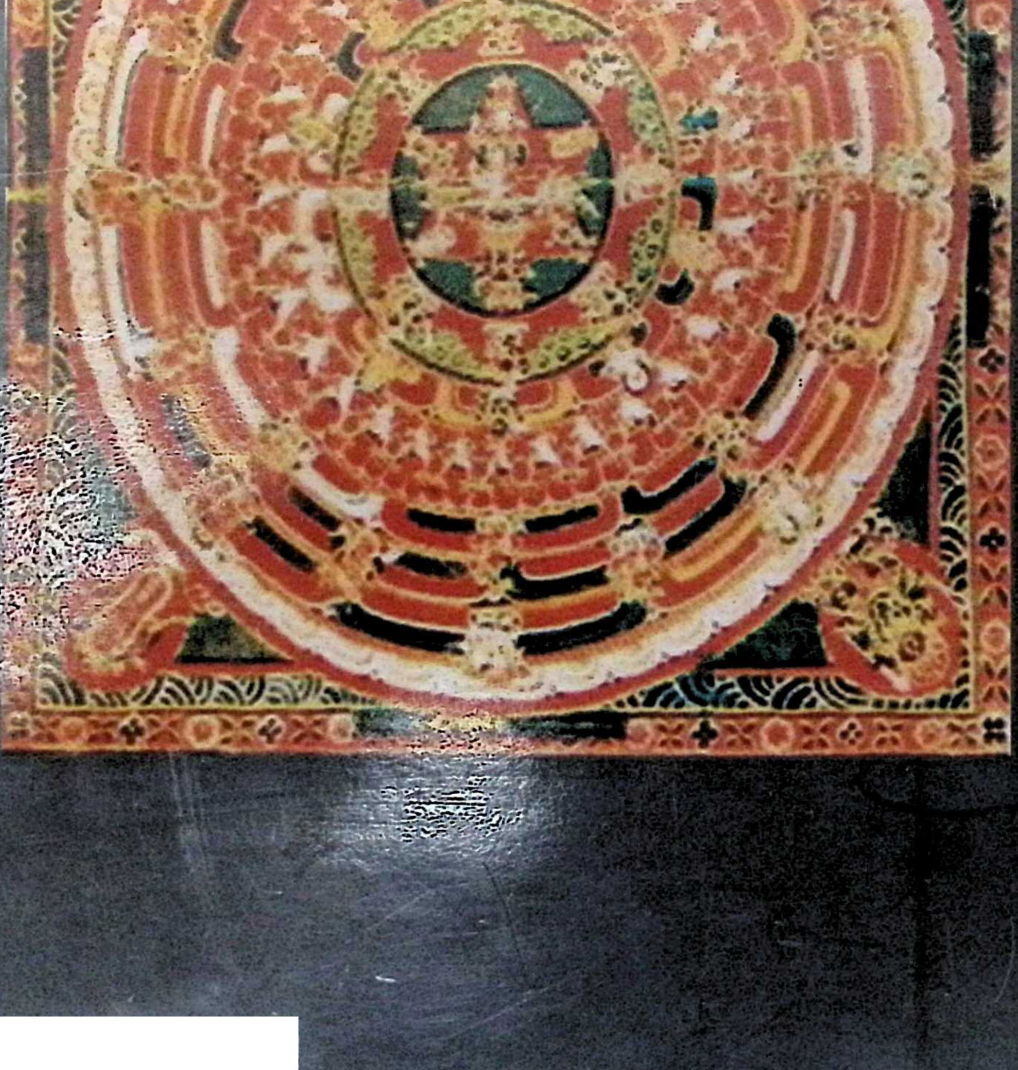
Due date of

Due date of

Dr. Kamal Shankar Srivastava, IAS, born in Varanasi (U.P.)., Indian Eminent Scholar, Indologist, Museologist, Journalist, Art Historian and Academician turned Administrator. Obtained the Post-Graduate degrees (M.A.s) in 15 (fifteen) different disciplines (i) Ancient Indian History, culture and Archaeology (ii) History (iii) Museology (iv) English Literature (v) Mass-Communication (vi) Public Administration (vii) Sociology (viii) Hindi Literature (ix) Sanskrit Literature (x) Philosophy & Religion (xi) Political Science & (xii) Social work, (xiii) Economics, (xiv) Defence Studies & (xv) Linguistics, apart from Master of Business Administration (MBA-HRM) and Master of Law (LL.M.). Awarded B.H.U. Gold Medal in 1981. In 1985, Awarded Ph.D. degree in AIHC & Archaeology, Museology from BHU, Varanasi. Also awarded post-graduate diplomas in 11 (Eleven) different disciplines i.e. Business Administration, Tourism Administration, Human Rights Law, Corporate law and Management, Environmental Law, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Intellectual property rights Law, labour Law, Sustainable Rural Development and Tribal Development Management. In 2003, awarded Doctor of Literature (D. Litt.) degree in History. In 2007, awarded LL.B. & Master of Law (LLM) Degree in 2010. Author of more than 99 (Ninety Nine) published and under publication books concerning different fields of Indian History, Art, Religion and Culture, Iconography, Museology, Tourism, Journalism, Painting, Indology, Heritage and Law etc. Life-fellow of numismatics society of India, Museums Association of India, Bihar Puravid Parishad, Patna, Institute of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, New Delhi, Indian Social Science Academy and Executive Member of Baudh Sanskriti Kendra, Patna, and Museum Association of India, New Delhi. Presented several papers and articles more than 79 (Seventy Nine) in the fields of Art, Indology, Museology and Law. Attended two weeks training programme on SAARC Countries in Bangla Desh, Dhaka.

Presently, he is an Officer of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) of Jharkhand Cadre and posted as Additional Director Shri Krishna Institute of Public Administration (SKIPA) i.e., (Administrative Training Institute), Govt. of Jharkhand, Ranchi.



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